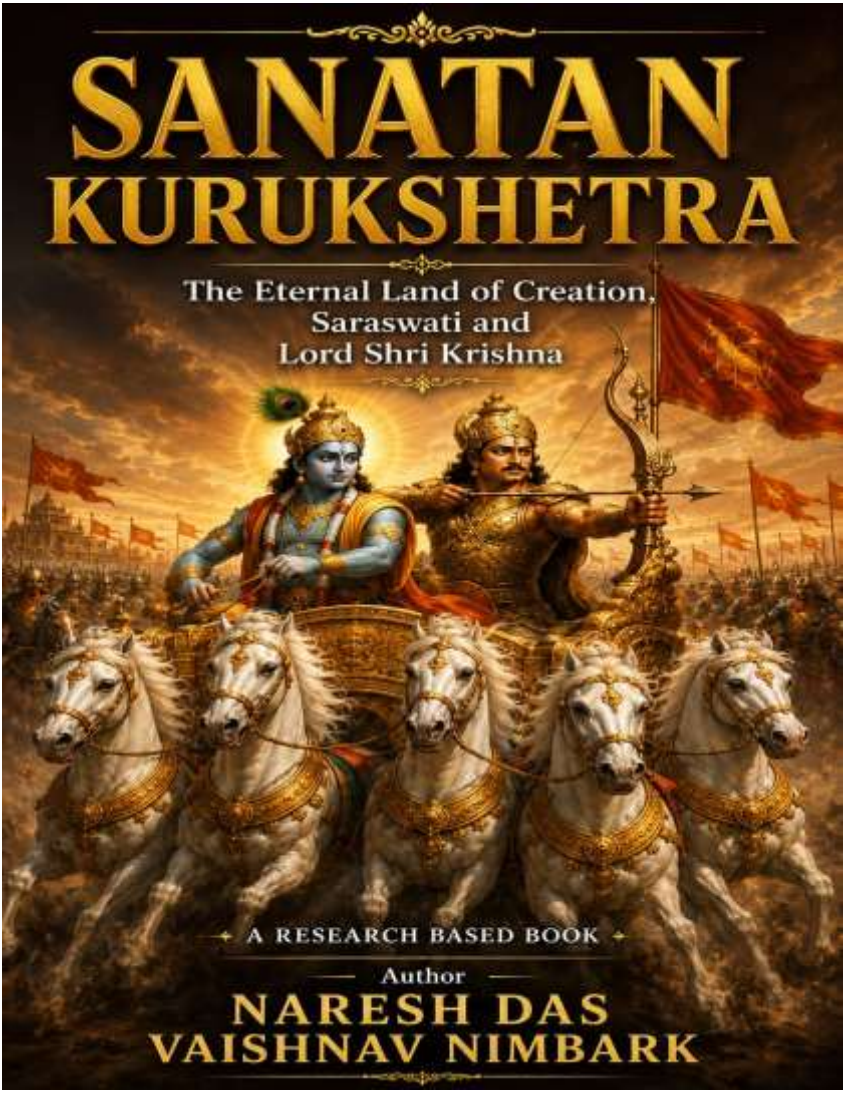

SANATAN
KURUKSHETRA
The Eternal Land of Creation,
Saraswati and
Lord Shri Krishna
A RESEARCH BASED BOOK
Author
NARESH DAS
VAISHNAV NIMBARK

SANATAN KURUKSHETRA

Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna

Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

(Retired Honorary Naib Subedar, Indian Army | Historian | Researcher | Author)

Dedication

This treatise is dedicated —

To Lord Brahma, the Creator, whose glory as the Uttar-vedi (the northern sacrificial altar) of the sacred land of Kurukshetra remains immortalised in the eternal scriptures.

To Mother Saraswati, whose divine stream made this sacred land a centre of Vedic knowledge, sacrifice, penance, and culture.

To Yogeshwar Bhagwan Shri Krishna, who, upon this very sacred land, bestowed upon Arjuna the divine discourse of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, granting all humanity the eternal path of action, righteousness, and liberation.

To the sages, seers, acharyas, saints, and mahatmas, and to the countless known and unknown ascetics, whose penance and renunciation have kept the sacred tradition of Kurukshetra alive through the ages.

And

To all the researchers, historians, archaeologists, scholars, and pilgrims who remain steadfastly devoted to the pursuit of truth, the preservation of Sanatan culture, and the renaissance of India's tradition of knowledge.

Respectfully dedicated.

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

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This treatise is an original work of research based on classical scriptures, government records, archaeological evidence, authentic research material, and the author's long-term field study. Where differing views exist on a subject, they have been presented impartially; and where any account is based on local tradition or folklore, this has been clearly indicated.

Disclaimer

The views, conclusions, and interpretations expressed in this treatise are based on the author's independent research. The possibility of factual errors cannot be ruled out; any such error, once noticed, will be duly corrected in a future edition.

Foreword

Kurukshetra is not merely a geographical region; it is the living symbol of those great memories of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, and Sanatan Dharma which have, for millennia, shown humanity the path of righteousness, knowledge, penance, sacrifice, and duty. This is the very sacred land where the ancient tradition of contemplation upon creation, the penance of Vedic sages, the cultural stream of the river Saraswati, and the immortal message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita that flowed from the sacred lips of Lord Shri Krishna all converge to form an incomparable heritage of world history.

The name Kurukshetra ordinarily brings to mind the Mahabharata War and the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, but its history is far more extensive and ancient than this alone. Vedic literature, the Brahmana texts, the Upanishads, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, Buddhist and Jain literature, the accounts of foreign travellers, archaeological excavations, and modern research all bear witness to the fact that Kurukshetra has been an extremely important centre in the development of Indian culture. Here, the continuously evolving traditions of religion, philosophy, education, sacrifice, pilgrimage, and folk life remain alive even today.

The purpose of the present treatise, 'Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna', is not merely to introduce its places of pilgrimage. Its purpose is to present Kurukshetra in its complete form — as a land where scripture, history, archaeology, geography, folk

tradition, and present-day cultural life appear as complements to one another.

In the making of this treatise, integrated use has been made of the available ancient Sanskrit scriptures, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, archaeological surveys, the records of the Government of India and the Government of Haryana, authentic material published by the Kurukshetra Development Board, university research, inscriptions, and the author's long-term field study. Where differing views exist on a subject, they have been presented impartially; and where any account is based on local tradition or folklore, this has been clearly indicated. The honouring of both faith and history is the fundamental methodology of this treatise.

This treatise offers a systematic and well-referenced discussion of the principal pilgrimage sites, sacred lakes, temples, ancient sites, archaeological remains, fairs, and cultural traditions of the 48-kos Kurukshetra, together with their related historical and mythological sources. The endeavour of each chapter is not merely to inform, but to bring the reader face to face with the historical and spiritual background of that place.

The author firmly believes that history is not preserved in books alone; it also remains preserved in land, rivers, inscriptions, archaeological sites, folk memory, and living traditions. It is with this conviction that years of field study of numerous tirthas, direct observation, and comparative

examination of sources have become the foundation stone of this treatise.

This book has not been written to propagate any particular sect, creed, or ideology. Its sole purpose is to bring to readers an authentic, balanced, and research-based introduction to India's invaluable cultural heritage — Sanatan Kurukshetra — so that future generations may understand the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of this sacred land.

If, upon reading this treatise, any student is inspired towards research, any family resolves to undertake a pilgrimage to the tirthas of Kurukshetra, or any reader develops a curiosity to know their cultural heritage, the author shall consider this endeavour successful.

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

(Retired Honorary Naib Subedar, Indian Army | Historian | Researcher | Author)

A Word from the Author

Dear Readers,

The book in your hands, "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," is not merely a book, but the humble fruit of more than four decades of devotion, faith, research, and lived experience.

In the year 1981, when I first set foot upon the sacred land of Kurukshetra as an ordinary pilgrim, I had no inkling that one day this very land would become the subject of the greatest research work of my life. At that time, the journey was one of faith; but after my retirement from the Indian Army in the year 2008, with the rank of Honorary Naib Subedar, those very journeys were transformed into a systematic research expedition.

Over the past eighteen years, I have visited, on numerous occasions and in person, the principal tirthas, ancient sacred lakes, temples, hermitages, archaeological sites, and historical remains of the 48-kos Kurukshetra. Wherever possible, I engaged in dialogue with local scholars, saints and mahatmas, priests, villagers, and government officials. I undertook a serious study of ancient scriptures, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, archaeological records, government publications, and material made available by the Kurukshetra Development Board. This treatise is the fruit of that long devotion.

In this book, my endeavour has not been to support or oppose any particular sect, creed, or ideology. My purpose is solely to present, on the basis of available evidence, historical facts, and direct study, as authentic and balanced an introduction as possible to the cultural, religious, and historical heritage of Kurukshetra.

If, upon reading this treatise, any student is inspired towards research, any family resolves to undertake a pilgrimage to the tirthas of Kurukshetra, or any reader develops a curiosity to know their cultural heritage, I shall consider this endeavour of mine successful.

I remain grateful to the Supreme Father Almighty, to my gurus, to my wife Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, to my family, my colleagues, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Shri Krishna Museum, and to all those known and unknown persons through whose cooperation this work could be completed.

I respectfully dedicate this treatise to Lord Shri Krishna, the sacred Mother Saraswati, the holy land of Kurukshetra, and the eternal cultural consciousness of India.

Your affection and your suggestions shall always remain a source of inspiration for my future research work.

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Honorary Naib Subedar (Retired), Indian Army

Historian | Independent Researcher | Author

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Chapter 1

Brahma Sarovar — The Heart of the Sacred Land, the Source of Creation, and the Pilgrimage of the Soul

Part 1: The First Time My Feet Touched This Ground

Some places are not merely seen — they are experienced. Some pilgrimages are not merely journeys — they become one's very life. For me, Brahma Sarovar is just such a pilgrimage.

In my childhood, when I first travelled about 125 kilometres from my village, Ramnagar, and reached the banks of this sacred lake, that boy had no idea that this journey would become a lifelong journey. From that day to this — over 62 years — I have circumambulated this lake countless times. Whenever I received leave during my years of military service, I invariably came here. Now, with advancing age, when my knees no longer serve me as they once did, I go around by battery-rickshaw for darshan.

But the feeling, even today, remains the same as it was in childhood.

Part 2: King Kuru's Penance and the Origin of the Name 'Kurukshetra'

The identity of any land is established not merely by its geographical extent, but by the ideals that it upholds through the ages. The sanctity of Kurukshetra is not founded on the Mahabharata War alone; its roots lie far deeper. According to Indian religious literature, this region came to be called 'Kurukshetra' because of the great penance and righteous devotion of King Kuru.

This account is exceedingly well known in Indian tradition, but for a researcher it is necessary to clarify its basis and the form in which it is accepted.

Who was King Kuru?

According to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, King Kuru was a mighty sovereign of the lunar dynasty. He was the son of King Samvarana and Tapati, daughter of the Sun-god. In due course, the entire dynasty came to be named the Kuru dynasty after him — the dynasty from which Shantanu, Bhishma, Pandu, Dhritarashtra, the Kauravas, and the Pandavas were born.

Thus King Kuru is not merely a historical or legendary figure; he is the progenitor of the very dynasty around which the entire history of the Mahabharata unfolded.

The Origin of the Name Kurukshetra

The Vamana Purana states clearly —

ādyaiṣā brahmaṇo vediḥ tato rāmahradaḥ smṛtaḥ.
kuruṇā ca yataḥ kṛṣṭaṁ kurukṣetraṁ tataḥ smṛtam..

Meaning: This place was, at first, the sacrificial altar of Brahma. It was later called Ramahrad. And when King Kuru ploughed this land, it came to be known by the name Kurukshetra.

This verse is of great importance, for it presents an orderly tradition of how the name of this region evolved — (1) Brahma's altar (Brahmakshetra), (2) Ramahrad, and (3) the land ploughed by Kuru (Kurukshetra). It is for this reason that most scholars hold that the name 'Kurukshetra' is connected with King Kuru.

King Kuru's Penance

According to the account given in the Puranas, King Kuru resolved that a region should be established on earth where righteousness, truth, and penance would remain forever alive.

He came to this land bearing a golden plough. According to tradition, he began ploughing this land using Lord Shiva's bull and Yama's buffalo as his draught animals.

When Indra, the king of the gods, beheld this sight, he asked, 'O King, why do you plough this deserted land?' King Kuru replied, 'I am sowing the seeds of righteousness in this land, so that the generations to come may live a life of dharma.'

This dialogue is regarded in Indian culture as symbolic. Its purpose is not to describe agriculture, but to convey that the true progress of society comes through moral values.

The Sowing of the Eight Virtues

According to Indian tradition, King Kuru resolved to establish eight great virtues in this land — truth (adherence to truth), tapas (self-discipline and spiritual practice), compassion (kindness towards all beings), charity (the spirit of selfless giving), forgiveness (magnanimity towards the wrongdoer), purity (external and internal cleanliness), yoga (self-restraint and union with God), and brahmacharya (control of the senses and a disciplined life).

These eight virtues are mentioned, with minor variations in wording, across different religious traditions. From a research standpoint, therefore, it is more appropriate to present them as the ideal virtues of dharma.

Lord Vishnu's Test

According to the legend, Lord Vishnu, beholding King Kuru's unwavering devotion, appeared before him and asked, 'O King, where are the seeds of the virtues you wish to sow?' King Kuru replied, 'Every limb of my body is itself the seed of these virtues.' He then offered his own body to the Lord. This episode is entirely religious and symbolic in character. Its purport is that the establishment of dharma comes not through words alone, but through complete self-surrender.

Indra's Boon

Pleased by King Kuru's penance, Indra granted a boon — that this land would forever be renowned by the name Kurukshetra, and that whoever gave up their life here righteously, whether in penance, sacrifice, or battle, would

attain the higher worlds. It is because of this belief that Kurukshetra came, in time, to be called Dharmakshetra, the sacred field of righteousness.

Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata

In the Vana Parva and other sections of the Mahabharata, Kurukshetra is described as an exceedingly sacred tirtha. In many places it is stated that bathing, charity, sacrifice, and ancestral rites performed here bear special fruit. The very first verse of the Bhagavad Gita affirms this fact — 'dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ' ("On the field of dharma, the field of Kuru, assembled and eager to fight..."). Had this region been merely a battlefield, it would not have been called 'Dharmakshetra'. This title stands as evidence of the land's pre-established religious eminence.

Ancient Names of Kurukshetra

In ancient times this land was known by various names — Brahmakshetra, Bhrigukshetra, Aryavarta, and Samantapanchaka. In the Naradiya Purana it is called 'Brahmavarta', described as the region lying between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati. All these names indicate that the tradition of this land's sanctity must go back even further than the age of King Kuru.

The Etymology of 'Haryana' — A Folk Belief

According to local folklore, the word 'Haryana' is believed to derive from 'Hari ka aana' — meaning, the land where Lord Vishnu-Krishna came. This is a devotion-centred folk interpretation. From a linguistic standpoint, scholars hold

differing views on the etymology of the word 'Haryana'; some also connect it with 'Harit-Aranya' (a green, verdant forest). It is therefore proper to present this not as an established etymology, but as a faith-centred folk tradition.

A Research Assessment

It is necessary for a historian to maintain a clear distinction between mythological narrative and historical fact. The account of King Kuru's penance is found chiefly in the Puranas and religious traditions. No direct archaeological evidence is presently available for it. This treatise therefore presents it as an Indian religious tradition, and not as a historical fact established by modern historiography.

Nevertheless, the message it embodies — righteousness, truth, compassion, penance, and self-surrender — represents the fundamental ideals of Indian culture. This is precisely why this legend has remained alive in the Indian collective consciousness for millennia.

Part 3: The Puranic Glory, the Tradition of Creation, and the Religious Significance of Brahma Sarovar

If Kurukshetra is called Dharmakshetra, then Brahma Sarovar is its soul. In Indian religious tradition it is regarded not merely as a body of water, but as a symbol of creation, sacrifice, penance, knowledge, and liberation. This is why its glory is continuously mentioned, from the Vedic literature down to the great Puranas.

It is necessary for a researcher to give faith and history their proper respective places. Accordingly, in this chapter, wherever Puranic tradition is presented, it is presented as such; and wherever historical or archaeological evidence is available, it has been set out separately.

Physical Form: Size and Extent

Brahma Sarovar is counted among Asia's largest man-made sacred water reservoirs. According to commonly available accounts, its eastern portion is approximately 1,800 feet long and 1,500 feet wide, while its western portion is approximately 1,500 feet wide; its depth is generally stated to be around 15 feet (these figures naturally vary somewhat across different sources). A broad paved platform and an extensive circumambulatory path have been built around the lake. In the middle of the lake stands an island where, according to tradition, the victorious Yudhishthira erected a victory pillar. A single circumambulation of this lake is held to be as meritorious as undertaking the pilgrimage of the entire 48-kos Kurukshetra circuit.

Brahma's Sacrificial Altar and the Tradition of Creation

According to Indian tradition, at the beginning of creation, Brahma performed a yajna in this very region. It is for this reason that this place is called 'Brahma's Altar'. The Vamana Purana states — 'ādyaiṣā brahmaṇo vediḥ tato rāmahradaḥ smṛtaḥ. kuruṇā ca yataḥ kṛṣṭaṁ kurukṣetraṁ tataḥ smṛtam.' Meaning: at first this place was the sacrificial altar of Brahma; it was later called Ramahrad, and it became renowned by the

name Kurukshetra because it was ploughed by King Kuru. This verse does not merely record a naming; it indicates that the religious eminence of this region was established even before the time of the Mahabharata.

Did Creation Truly Happen Here?

As a historian, it is necessary to clarify that the statement 'creation happened right here' is an article of faith described in Indian religious tradition and the Puranas. Modern science views this matter from a different perspective. This treatise therefore accepts this statement in the following form: according to Indian mythological tradition, Brahma performed a yajna at Kurukshetra and thereby inaugurated the order of creation. This presentation neither denies the faith nor transgresses the bounds of history.

Ramahrad, Samantapanchaka, and the Parashurama Tradition

Among the ancient names of Brahma Sarovar, 'Ramahrad' and 'Samantapanchaka' are also noteworthy, and are connected with Parashurama, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to the account given in the Mahabharata, Parashurama created five pools of blood (hradas) here, which, in time, through the blessing of the ancestors, were transformed into sacred lakes — and this came to be called the region of Samantapanchaka.

No historical verification of this account is available; it is a purely mythological tradition, preserved in the Mahabharata and the Vamana Purana. Nevertheless, this tradition underscores the antiquity of this land's sanctity — it indicates

that the pilgrimage-eminence of Kurukshetra has been traced back even beyond the age of King Kuru, to the era of Vishnu's incarnation as Parashurama.

Brahma Sarovar and Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata

In the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, Kurukshetra is called the foremost of all tirthas. Many verses state that the merit obtained here from bathing, charity, sacrifice, and ancestral rites is regarded as greater than at other tirthas. Most scholars hold that the Samantapanchaka region described in the Mahabharata corresponds to the present-day Kurukshetra region. This is why the glory of Brahma Sarovar becomes an inseparable part of the Mahabharata tradition.

Memories from the Time of the Mahabharata

Many local traditions connected with the Mahabharata remain alive in the Brahma Sarovar precincts even today. According to folklore, on the last day of the war, Duryodhana took refuge by hiding in the waters of this very lake, and the victorious Yudhishthira erected a victory pillar on the island in the middle of the lake. The extremely ancient well known as 'Draupadi Koop', situated within the precincts, is also considered part of this tradition, and many of the lake's ghats are known by the names of principal figures from the Mahabharata.

It should be noted that all these accounts are based on local folklore and tradition, and not on verified history. Nevertheless, their cultural significance lies in the fact that

these stories, generation after generation, keep this land connected to the memory of the Mahabharata.

Brahma Sarovar in the Puranas

Kurukshetra finds mention in numerous Puranas, chief among them being the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana (Kurukshetra Mahatmya), the Naradiya Purana, the Padma Purana, and the Matsya Purana. In these texts, Brahma Sarovar is described as a sacrificial ground, a meritorious tirtha, an abode of the gods, and a foremost place for ancestral offerings. In particular, the Kurukshetra Mahatmya section of the Skanda Purana states that a pilgrimage to Kurukshetra is held to destroy a person's sins.

The Tradition of Eclipse Bathing

Among the most ancient and celebrated traditions of Brahma Sarovar is the special importance attached to bathing during a solar or lunar eclipse. Indian religious belief holds that bathing, chanting, charity, and fire-oblations performed here at the time of an eclipse yield special merit. This tradition is historically very old — medieval travellers wrote in their travel accounts that lakhs of pilgrims would arrive at Kurukshetra on the occasion of an eclipse. Even today, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, vast numbers of pilgrims from India and abroad come to bathe in Brahma Sarovar, and the administration puts in place extensive security and arrangements.

Ancestral Rites and Religious Rituals

Brahma Sarovar is not merely a place for bathing. Even today, numerous religious rites are performed here, including shraddha, ancestral offerings (pitri-tarpan), yajnas, recitation of the Gita, Rudrabhishek, offering of lamps, evening aarti, and the ritual worship of water-filled pitchers. These religious traditions have kept Brahma Sarovar from becoming merely a historical monument; they have kept it a living tirtha to this day.

Brahma Sarovar and Indian Cultural Unity

The greatest distinction of Brahma Sarovar is that it is not visited by the people of Haryana alone. Pilgrims arrive here from Uttarakhand, Himachal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal, Odisha, South India, and Nepal, among many other regions. During the International Gita Mahotsav, numerous foreign scholars, researchers, and students of Indian culture are also present here. In this way, Brahma Sarovar has become not merely a regional tirtha, but a centre of the entire Indian cultural consciousness.

A Research Conclusion

A study of Brahma Sarovar brings three levels clearly to light — religious tradition (Brahma's sacrificial altar, the tradition of creation, eclipse bathing, and the tirtha's mahatmya), historical continuity (its sustained eminence from the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and medieval travellers down to the modern era), and present-day cultural significance (the International Gita Mahotsav, religious tourism, and cultural

heritage). It is the convergence of these three levels that grants Brahma Sarovar its place among India's most important tirthas.

Part 4: Historical Development, Archaeological Evidence, and Modern Revival

Had the glory of Brahma Sarovar been confined to the Puranas alone, it could have been called merely a matter of faith; but its distinguishing feature is that this tirtha finds continual mention among travellers, historians, records, and modern administrative documents across different eras. This makes clear that this tirtha has remained a living centre of Indian cultural life for millennia.

The Tradition of Brahma Sarovar after the Mahabharata

Even after the Mahabharata War, the religious significance of Kurukshetra did not diminish. The traditions of Vedic sacrifices, ancestral rites, and eclipse bathing continued unbroken. By the time of the Gupta period (4th–6th centuries CE), Kurukshetra had once again become a leading tirtha of northern India. In this period, the tirthas of the Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Shakta traditions alike developed within this same region. Brahma Sarovar remained the centre of all these religious activities.

During the time of Emperor Harshavardhana (7th century), Thanesar (Sthaneshwar) was the principal capital of northern India. The Chinese traveller Xuanzang described Thanesar in his travel account as a great religious centre. Although he did

not record the name of Brahma Sarovar separately, his account makes clear that this entire region was regarded as an exceedingly sacred tirtha at that time as well.

Accounts of Medieval Muslim Scholars

The celebrated scholar Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048 CE) mentioned Kurukshetra in his renowned work, Kitab-ul-Hind. He wrote that on the occasion of a solar eclipse, countless pilgrims come here to bathe, and that Indian society regards it as exceedingly sacred. Al-Biruni also noted the Hindu belief that, at the time of an eclipse, a spiritual confluence of many sacred rivers takes place at Kurukshetra. This account is proof that, roughly a thousand years ago, the pilgrimage tradition of Brahma Sarovar was as much alive as it is today.

Abul Fazl's Description

Abul Fazl, court historian of the Mughal emperor Akbar, mentioned Kurukshetra in his celebrated work, the Ain-i-Akbari, writing that a vast multitude gathers here on the occasion of a solar eclipse. He compared the vastness of Brahma Sarovar to a small sea and wrote that lakhs of people come here to bathe from different parts of India. This account carries particular significance, for it forms part not of any religious text, but of Mughal-era administrative history.

The View of European Travellers

The French physician and traveller François Bernier, who visited India in the seventeenth century, also mentioned Kurukshetra. He described the crowds that gathered at the time of an eclipse and the religious fervour that accompanied

it. These accounts by European travellers make clear that Brahma Sarovar was not merely a local tirtha, but a renowned religious centre of the entire Indian subcontinent.

An Archaeological Perspective

The present form of Brahma Sarovar has developed in the modern era, but archaeological remains recovered from the surrounding region confirm the antiquity of this place. Various sites in the Kurukshetra region have yielded Painted Grey Ware, Northern Black Polished Ware, Kushana-period remains, Gupta-period sculptures, and medieval architectural remains. All this evidence points to continuous human settlement and religious activity in this region.

It must be noted that not every stone of the present-day Brahma Sarovar can be said to date to the Mahabharata era. Most of the present ghats were constructed in modern times. A clear separation of history and faith is therefore necessary.

Modern Reconstruction

By the middle of the twentieth century, Brahma Sarovar had fallen into a state of considerable disrepair. In many places the water level was low, the ghats had crumbled, and there was a lack of proper conservation. In the 1960s, this state of affairs gave rise to national concern. It was at this time that Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, India's former acting Prime Minister, took up the cause of Kurukshetra's conservation. Through his efforts, the Kurukshetra Development Board was established in 1968. This very institution continues, to this day, to bear the responsibility for the conservation, development, and

management of the principal tirthas of the 48-kos Kurukshetra.

Gulzarilal Nanda's Contribution

Gulzarilal Nanda was not merely a politician; he was a devoted follower of Indian culture and the Gita tradition. Through his inspiration, the scientific restoration of Brahma Sarovar was carried out — paved ghats were constructed, a modern system of water conservation was developed, lighting arrangements were installed, facilities for pilgrims were expanded, and plans for the conservation of Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Pehowa, and other tirthas were initiated. The magnificent Brahma Sarovar seen today owes an immense debt to Gulzarilal Nanda's vision.

Gulzarilal Nanda: A Life of Simplicity and Dedication

Gulzarilal Nanda (4 July 1898 – 15 January 1998) is remembered in Indian popular memory as a symbol of simplicity and selfless service. Despite twice serving as the country's acting Prime Minister and holding a Union ministerial post for years, he never acquired personal wealth. After his retirement from active politics, the final years of his life were extremely modest, indeed marked by hardship — according to widely reported accounts, he was once compelled to give up even a rented house due to financial difficulty, a matter that was also reported in the newspapers of the time. In 1997 he was honoured with India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. He passed away in Ahmedabad on 15 January 1998, at the age of nearly ninety-nine.

In accordance with his final wish, his ashes were kept safe at Kurukshetra itself. The 'Gulzarilal Nanda Memorial', built under the aegis of the Kurukshetra Development Board, stands to this day near the Brahma Sarovar precincts, where a commemorative programme is held every year on his birth anniversary. That a man who devoted twenty-two years to the revival of Kurukshetra should have this final bond with this sacred land is one of the most poignant memories of his life.

The International Gita Mahotsav

The International Gita Mahotsav, organised under the auspices of the Kurukshetra Development Board, has brought Brahma Sarovar global recognition. Every year, on the occasion of Gita Jayanti, Vedic yajnas, recitations of the Gita, cultural programmes, international seminars, book fairs, craft fairs, and festivals of lights are organised here. Scholars, saints, artists, and researchers from many countries of the world take part in it. In this way, Brahma Sarovar has become not merely an ancient heritage site, but a living cultural centre.

The Researcher's Direct Observation

The author of this treatise has made numerous visits to Brahma Sarovar over the past several decades. A direct study of the site was undertaken during different seasons, on the occasion of eclipse festivals, and during the International Gita Mahotsav. This field study made it clear that religious tradition, local memory, administrative conservation, and modern tourism together constitute the present-day identity of Brahma Sarovar. Wherever the author's personal

experiences are mentioned in this book, they have been clearly presented as 'field study', so that they remain distinct from historical fact.

Conclusion of Part 4

The greatness of Brahma Sarovar lies not in religious faith alone, but in its historical continuity. The Mahabharata, the Puranas, the accounts of medieval travellers, archaeological evidence, modern conservation, and present-day cultural activities — all of these together grant it a distinctive place among the world's most ancient living pilgrimage traditions. For the historian it is a subject of research; for the devotee, a centre of faith; and for India's cultural consciousness, an invaluable heritage.

Part 5: The Present Brahma Sarovar, Cultural Heritage, and the Path Ahead

Present Form: A Confluence of Ancient Faith and Modern Conservation

The Brahma Sarovar of the twenty-first century is an example of that living tradition of Indian culture in which religious beliefs thousands of years old exist side by side with modern management and conservation. The conservation work undertaken from time to time by the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board has developed it into a tirtha of world standard.

Today Brahma Sarovar has broad paved ghats, marble steps, a circumambulatory path, a clean water system, electric lighting,

security arrangements, resting areas, parking, toilets, drinking water, medical facilities, and the necessary provisions for persons with disabilities as well. This development stands as an example that, if cultural heritage is conserved through scientific means, it can remain safe for future generations too.

The Central Island and the Message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita

The island situated in the middle of Brahma Sarovar is the spiritual centre of this entire tirtha. The grand statue of Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna's chariot installed here is not merely a work of art, but a symbol of the immortal message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita given to human civilisation. Although, according to classical tradition, the teaching of the Gita took place at Jyotisar, this statue at Brahma Sarovar has nonetheless become the spiritual identity of the whole of Kurukshetra. Thousands of pilgrims arrive here daily to recall the verses of the Gita and resolve to adopt the principles of dharma, action, and selfless service in their lives.

The Principal Sights of Brahma Sarovar

The Brahma Sarovar complex is not merely a lake. Around it stand the Sarveshwar Mahadev Temple, Draupadi Koop, the statue depicting the Gita's teaching, the memorial of Shri Krishna's and Arjuna's chariot, various ghats, yajna halls, aarti sites, the Gulzarilal Nanda Memorial, the nearby Shri Krishna Museum, the Birla Gita Mandir, Baba Nath ki Haveli, and other ancient temples of the Sthaneshwar area. A combined study of all these sites establishes that Brahma Sarovar is not merely a religious site, but a complete cultural complex.

The Solar Eclipse and the World's Largest Confluence of Faith

The most distinctive feature of Brahma Sarovar is bathing at the time of a solar eclipse. Since ancient times it has been believed that bathing, chanting, charity, and yajna performed here at the time of a solar eclipse yield special merit. Historical records reveal that, across different periods, lakhs of pilgrims have gathered here on the occasion of an eclipse. Even in modern times the administration makes special arrangements, and pilgrims arrive here from within India and abroad on this occasion. In this way, Brahma Sarovar has also become an important centre of religious tourism and cultural unity.

The Researcher's Field Study

The author of this treatise has had the good fortune to undertake a direct study of Brahma Sarovar on numerous occasions, from childhood to the present day. Repeated visits were made here whenever leave was available during military service, and, after retirement, for the purpose of research. These visits made it clear that the true significance of Brahma Sarovar lies not merely in its historical or religious description, but in its living tradition. The pilgrims who come here every day, the evening aarti, the chanting of Vedic mantras, the recitation of the Gita, and the continuous round of religious observances keep this tirtha alive even today. In this book, the author's personal experiences have been presented solely as 'field observation', and not as historical evidence.

The Need for the Future

Brahma Sarovar and the entire 48-kos Kurukshetra region still stand in need of extensive scientific research — particularly in the fields of archaeological excavation, the ancient system of water management, the connection with the river Saraswati, ancient pilgrimage routes, the digitisation of records, and the documentation of local oral traditions. If systematic research is carried out on these subjects, Kurukshetra can attain an even more significant place in the study of world history and Indian civilisation.

Epilogue

Brahma Sarovar is not merely a vast body of water; it is a reflection of the Indian soul. Here lies Brahma's tradition of creation, King Kuru's penance, the memories of the Mahabharata, Shri Krishna's message of dharma, the sages' spiritual practice, the words of the saints, and the unwavering faith of crores of devotees.

For the historian, it is a subject of study; for the archaeologist, a centre of research; for the student of religious philosophy, a source of inspiration; and for the ordinary devotee, a sacred abode of spiritual peace.

Brahma Sarovar teaches us that civilisations are not built of stone alone; they are built of memory, sacrament, knowledge, and enduring cultural tradition. It is for this reason that Brahma Sarovar is a cultural heritage not of Kurukshetra alone, but of the whole of India.

Whoever comes here even once becomes forever bound to this place.

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Chapter 2

The Sacred Land of the Gita — Jyotisar

Where Lord Shri Krishna Gave Arjuna Immortal Knowledge

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: A Historical Introduction to Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra and Jyotisar

If, in the history of Sanatan culture, any single place may be called the spiritual university of the whole of humanity, it is Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra. This is the very sacred land where, about five thousand years ago, Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, just before the onset of the Mahabharata War. This teaching was not for Arjuna alone; it became an eternal message of life's philosophy for the whole of humankind.

Kurukshetra is mentioned in the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Naradiya Purana, the Brahma Purana, the Padma Purana, and many other Vedic texts. The very first verse of the Mahabharata proclaims the glory of this land — 'dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ' — that is, this is not merely a battlefield, but a land of righteousness, penance, sacrifice, and knowledge.

At the centre of this very Dharmakshetra lies Jyotisar, whose meaning is — 'the lake of light' or 'the source of divine

knowledge'. According to Indian tradition, this is the very place where Lord Shri Krishna dispelled Arjuna's delusion and gave the immortal message of karma yoga, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, and liberation.

The Concept of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Since ancient times, Kurukshetra has been regarded as a pilgrimage region of 48 kos. The ancient measure of one kos varies across different sources; nevertheless, based on the present-day activities of the Kurukshetra Development Board (such as the 24-kilometre 'Ashtakosi Yatra'), its total circumference may be estimated at around 140–150 kilometres. It is not a single town, but a vast religious region made up of numerous tirthas, lakes, hermitages, and historical sites.

At present, this sacred region extends across the districts of Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Jind, and Panipat in Haryana. According to recent announcements of the Kurukshetra Development Board, 182 tirthas have been identified across this entire region (although this number varies across different sources in different periods, ranging from 51 to as many as 367, since the boundaries and recognition of tirtha-enumeration have changed over time). A brief introduction to these very 182 tirthas is given later in this treatise, in Chapter 30.

A Real Journey of 400 Kilometres

The journey described in this book is not merely a symbolic account of the traditional 48-kos circuit. We undertook a direct

visit to these tirthas by modern road. Owing to winding rural roads, tirthas situated across different districts, the routes taken to reach them, and the travel required to each site, our entire pilgrimage was accomplished over approximately 400 kilometres of road travel. Wherever this book therefore mentions the '48-kos yatra', it refers to the actual visiting of sites across the entire pilgrimage region.

My Fifty-First Journey

On the morning of 16 December 2025, I set out on my fifty-first pilgrimage to Jyotisar. The previous night we had rested at the Vairagi Dharamshala in Kurukshetra. This dharamshala is an outstanding example of the tradition of service of the Sanatan Vaishnava Bairagi community, where thousands of pilgrims are provided lodging, free of any self-interest, every year.

In the morning, my wife, Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson Bhavesh, and my granddaughter Divyanshi joined me on this sacred journey. This journey was not one of darshan alone; its purpose was also to study the history, archaeological significance, and religious tradition of each tirtha.

As we made our way towards Jyotisar, the same thought kept returning to my mind — that today we were going towards the place where the greatest dialogue in human history had taken place. On one side lay Arjuna's delusion; on the other, Lord Shri Krishna's divine teaching. That very dialogue still guides the lives of crores of people today.

As a soldier, I have seen many places, but the devotion, peace, and spiritual energy I felt while approaching Jyotisar, I have found nowhere else. Perhaps this is the spiritual power of this land.

In a few moments we were to arrive at that sacred site where the eternal banyan tree still stands as a silent witness to the immortal message of the Gita.

Part 2: The Akshaya Vatavriksha — The Living Witness of the Gita

A short while later, our car arrived at the main entrance of the Jyotisar tirtha. As soon as I stepped down from the vehicle and set my first foot upon this sacred land, my heart filled with devotion. It seemed as though the entire atmosphere was still lit by the echo of Lord Shri Krishna's divine teaching.

The present-day Jyotisar complex has been systematically developed by the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB). Here there are a grand entrance gate, paved paths, gardens, lighting arrangements, explanatory inscriptions, and the facilities necessary for pilgrims. Lakhs of devotees come here for darshan every year, from India and abroad.

The Akshaya Vatavriksha

The most sacred site and the chief attraction of Jyotisar is the Akshaya Vatavriksha, the eternal banyan tree. According to Indian tradition, it was beneath this very banyan tree that Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad

Bhagavad Gita. It is regarded, therefore, not merely as a tree, but as a living symbol of Indian spiritual history.

The banyan tree visible today represents a living tradition, continuously developing upon an ancient original. Its branches spread far and wide, and devotees circumambulate it in remembrance of Lord Shri Krishna. The marble platform built around the tree presents a fine example of devotion and conservation.

Historical Continuity — A Local Tradition

It is held that the religious importance of this place persisted even in the medieval period, and that the tradition of worship here continued unbroken, so that this region came to be counted among the principal centres of Indian spiritual consciousness. Some local accounts also mention a connection between Adi Shankaracharya and this region; however, no independent and firm historical verification of this is available, and it is therefore recorded in this treatise as a local tradition rather than as established history.

The Modern History of Conservation

According to the historical records available, the paved platform built around the banyan tree was constructed with the support of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, based in Bihar — an example of that old tradition, observed across various parts of India, of Hindu rulers contributing to the conservation of distant tirthas. After Independence, the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board carried out extensive development of this entire complex.

Today this site is counted among India's most significant places of pilgrimage from three perspectives alike — religious, historical, and cultural.

My First Darshan

I approached the banyan tree slowly. For some moments I stood gazing at it without speaking. In my military life I had seen the peaks of the Himalayas, the battlefield of Kargil, and the soil of Africa during a United Nations mission, but the spiritual peace I felt standing before this banyan tree is difficult to express in words.

With folded hands, I offered my reverent salutations.

My grandson Bhavesh, standing beside me, asked —

"Grandfather, did Lord Shri Krishna truly stand right here?"

I answered, smiling —

"My child, Indian tradition has, for thousands of years, held this to be the very place where Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the teaching of the Gita. It is therefore not merely a tree, but a symbol of the Gita's immortal knowledge."

My granddaughter Divyanshi too folded her hands in reverence and bowed. In that moment I felt that the heritage of Sanatan culture was reaching the next generation.

The Eternal Light of Knowledge

Jyotisar is not merely a religious site. It is a symbol, for the whole of humanity, of knowledge, duty, and self-realisation.

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is studied today in many languages of the world, but that divine message had its origin right here, upon this sacred land.

Even today, when a devotee sits in silence for a few moments beneath this banyan tree, it feels as though that same message of Lord Shri Krishna is being heard once again — "Perform your duty, uphold righteousness, and remain steadfast upon the path of truth."

With this very feeling we moved onward, to where the magnificent statue depicting Lord Shri Krishna's cosmic form awaited us.

Part 3: The Panchadhatu Colossal Statue and the Gita's Universal Message

After the darshan and circumambulation of the Akshaya Vatavriksha, we moved towards the part of the Jyotisar complex where the grand statue depicting Lord Shri Krishna's cosmic form is installed. Even from a distance, this statue draws the attention of devotees. As we drew nearer, its immensity and artistry began to fill the mind with wonder.

This statue gives form to the memory of the Vishvarupa, the cosmic form, that Lord Shri Krishna revealed to Arjuna. An attempt has been made here to embody that very divine vision described in the eleventh chapter of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, the Vishvarupa Darshana Yoga.

The Panchadhatu Statue

The statue installed within the complex is cast in panchadhatu, an alloy of five metals. In Indian sculptural tradition, images made of panchadhatu are held to be of special religious and cultural significance. Panchadhatu generally consists of a combination of gold, silver, copper, iron, and zinc or tin. In ancient India this alloy was widely used in the making of divine images, as it was considered superior from the standpoint of durability, sanctity, and artistry alike.

In the statue, Lord Shri Krishna is shown as the charioteer, guiding Arjuna's chariot. This scene depicts not merely a moment of the Mahabharata War, but also symbolises divine guidance in human life. Arjuna represents every human being, and Shri Krishna is the symbol of that divine consciousness which shows the right path in times of crisis.

The Cosmic Form of the Gita

In the eleventh chapter of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna prays to the Lord for a vision of His divine form. Lord Shri Krishna grants him a divine eye and reveals His cosmic form.

divi sūrya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā.
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ..

(Gita 11.12)

Meaning: were a thousand suns to rise together in the sky at once, their combined radiance would scarcely compare to the splendour of that supreme cosmic form.

This statue at Jyotisar recalls that very chapter to devotees and conveys the message that God is not confined to any single form or limit; His form is infinite.

A Soldier's Reflection

I spent years in the Indian Army. In life, there came many moments when only a single instant separated crisis from peace. Yet, standing before this statue, I felt how small a human being is, and how vast the design of the Divine.

In that moment I recalled the Gita's message —

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata.
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmy aham..

(Gita 4.7)

For the protection of dharma, God guides humanity in various forms from time to time. This message held true at the time of the Mahabharata, and it remains just as relevant today.

The Curiosity of the New Generation

Gazing at the statue, my grandson Bhavesh asked —

"Grandfather, why is God shown so immense?"

I answered —

"My child, this is not God's actual size, but a symbol of His infinite form. It means that the entire universe is contained within that one supreme power."

Divyanshi gazed at the statue for a while and said —

"Grandfather, it feels as though God is still explaining things to Arjuna, even now."

Hearing her words, my heart filled with joy. This, indeed, is the greatest distinction of this tirtha — it does not merely narrate history; it gives every generation the message of dharma, duty, and truth.

The Global Significance of Jyotisar

Today the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita has been translated into many languages of the world. It is studied in universities, military academies, management institutes, and centres of philosophical study. In this light, Jyotisar is a shared spiritual heritage not of India alone, but of the whole of humanity.

The panchadhatu statue installed here reminds every visitor that if wisdom, duty, and righteousness accompany a person through every struggle of life, victory is assured.

After the darshan of the colossal statue, we moved onward towards the Gita Gyan Mandir, where the immortal verses of the Gita still show devotees the path of life.

Part 4: The Immortal Verses of the Gita and a Soldier's Philosophy of Life

After sitting in silence for a while at Jyotisar, one thought kept rising again and again in my mind — what is it that, even after nearly five thousand years, has kept the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita the most widely read spiritual text in the world?

The answer is clear — the Gita is not a book of any one religion, caste, or era; it is the eternal guidance of the whole of human life. Today the Gita is studied in many of the world's universities, military academies, management institutes, and centres of philosophical study. On subjects such as crisis, struggle, leadership, duty, self-confidence, and moral decision-making, the Gita's philosophy remains just as relevant today as it was in the age of the Mahabharata.

Sitting upon the sacred ground of Jyotisar, I recalled some of those verses of the Gita which have deeply influenced both my military life and my later life of research.

1. The Message of Karma Yoga

karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana.
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi..

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita 2.47)

Meaning: A person's right is to action alone, never to its fruits. One should therefore continue performing one's duty without concern for the results.

Serving in the Indian Army, I experienced this principle directly. A soldier posted at the border performs his duty; he does not concern himself with the outcome. This is the Gita's karma yoga.

2. The Immortality of the Soul

nainaṁ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṁ dahati pāvakaḥ.
na cainaṁ kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ..

(Gita 2.23)

Meaning: Weapons cannot cut the soul, fire cannot burn it, water cannot wet it, and wind cannot dry it. The soul is eternal and imperishable.

This verse is not merely a philosophical statement; it becomes a source of courage. When a person understands that the soul is immortal, overcoming fear becomes easier.

3. The Ideal of the Man of Steady Wisdom

duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-spṛhaḥ.
vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir ucyate..

(Gita 2.56)

Meaning: One whose mind remains undisturbed in sorrow, who is free from craving in pleasure, and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger, is called a person of steady wisdom.

For a soldier, this is not merely spiritual teaching, but the supreme principle of mental discipline. In moments of crisis, patience is the greatest weapon of all.

4. Selfless Devotion

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru.
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo 'si me..

(Gita 18.65)

Meaning: Fix your mind on Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer Me your obeisance. By doing so, you shall attain Me alone.

This very selfless devotion is the fundamental basis of the Sanatan Vaishnava Bairagi tradition. Jagadguru Shri Nimbarkacharya, too, gave this same message of loving devotion through the joint worship of Radha-Krishna.

5. Complete Surrender

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja.
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ..

(Gita 18.66)

Meaning: Abandoning all pride and attachment, take refuge in Me alone. I shall deliver you; do not grieve.

This final teaching of the Gita conveys the message of complete trust in, and surrender to, God.

A Soldier's Experience

As I sat upon that sacred ground at Jyotisar, many memories of my military life began to rise before me like a moving picture. The high peaks of Kargil, the difficult days of the United Nations peacekeeping mission, struggles, challenges, and the many ups and downs of life — all of it came back to me, one by one.

I realised that, had the principles of the Gita not been part of my life, facing difficult circumstances would perhaps not have been so easy. The Gita taught me — there is no dharma greater

than duty, no weapon greater than courage, and no path to victory greater than truth.

It was this very inspiration that gave me the strength to take up the pen after my military life. If it is the rifle that guards a nation's borders, it is the pen that guards a nation's culture and history. It was this very feeling that led me to research into the forgotten history of the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition.

As I took leave of the sacred land of Jyotisar, I carried with me a single resolve — that as long as life remains, this work of propagating Sanatan culture, the message of the Gita, and India's glorious history shall continue without cease.

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4. The Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) — official particulars concerning the 48-Kos Kurukshetra and its 182 tirthas.

5. The Haryana Tourism Department — official publications concerning Jyotisar.

6. Local and encyclopaedic sources — historical accounts concerning the Akshaya Vatavriksha and the construction of its platform.

7. The author's field study and direct observation (including his fifty-first journey, December 2025).

Chapter 3

Sanatan Kurukshetra — Creation, Saraswati, the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna

The Great Confluence of Science and the Vedas

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: The Land Where Creation Began

The sacred land of India holds many tirthas, but if there is one place that carries, together, the honour of all four titles — 'Dharmakshetra', 'Yajnabhoomi', 'Vedabhoomi', and 'Gitabhoomi' — it is Kurukshetra.

Kurukshetra is not merely a district or a geographical region. It is the very soul of Indian civilisation. This is the land where the Vedic sages performed their yajnas, where Vedic culture developed between the Saraswati and the Drishadvati, where the great war of the Mahabharata was fought, and where Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the immortal teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

For thousands of years, our Vedas, the Brahmana texts, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and local traditions have described the glory of this land. In the modern age, satellite imaging, geological study, archaeological excavation, and geo-chemical research have offered a fresh perspective on many historical

aspects of this region. Kurukshetra is thus among those rare places where faith and research come forward as complements to one another.

The Vedic Identity of Dharmakshetra

The very first verse of the Mahabharata is renowned across the world —

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ.

Here the word 'Dharmakshetra' is not merely a symbol of religious faith. In Vedic literature too, this region is described as a land of sacrifice, penance, and the spiritual practice of sages.

The Shatapatha Brahmana records that the region lying between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati was regarded as 'Devayajana' — that is, the sacrificial ground of the gods. According to scholars, it was this very region that, in time, became renowned by the name Kurukshetra.

The Taittiriya Samhita, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Naradiya Purana, and other texts likewise give a detailed account of the religious significance of this land.

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra

According to ancient tradition, the extent of Kurukshetra is held to be 48 kos. By modern measure, this is a cultural-religious circuit of roughly 150 kilometres.

Under the present administrative arrangement, this region extends chiefly across five districts of Haryana — Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Jind, and Panipat.

According to the official 'guide to the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra' published by the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), a total of 182 tirthas have been documented in this region, the list ending with '182. Ram Sharan Tirtha — Hathlana (associated with the Mahabharata)'. Each tirtha carries its own historical, religious, and cultural significance. This book presents a sequential study of these principal tirthas.

Creation and Brahma's Yajna

According to the Puranas, at the beginning of creation, Brahma performed a great yajna in this very region. It is for this reason that it is also called Brahmakshetra and Dharmakshetra.

Although this episode is regarded as religious tradition, it remains a significant fact that Vedic literature has consistently remembered Kurukshetra as an exceedingly ancient sacrificial ground. This is why, for thousands of years, this region has remained the centre of Indian pilgrimage tradition.

The Meeting of the Vedas and Science

For many years it was held that the mention of the river Saraswati was confined to religious texts alone. But research conducted over the past few decades by Indian and international scientific institutions has identified numerous

ancient river courses, or palaeochannels, in north-western India.

Studies by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and various universities indicate that a vast, ancient river system once existed across Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. These studies have brought forward new scientific questions and important evidence concerning the river Saraswati.

It is for this reason that Kurukshetra today has become not merely a subject of religious faith, but also a leading centre of research in geography, archaeology, geology, hydrology, and history.

Part 2: The Mystery of Three Great Rivers — the Yamuna, the Sutlej, and the Saraswati

The greatness of Kurukshetra is not confined to the Mahabharata or the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita alone. The true identity of this land is bound up with three great rivers which, for thousands of years, gave life to the civilisation, culture, and agriculture of northern India. These three rivers were the Saraswati, the Yamuna, and the Sutlej.

These rivers are mentioned in the Vedas and Puranas not merely as religious symbols, but as an actual geography. Modern science too, through satellite imagery, geological study, sediment analysis, and archaeological research, has

made clear that the river system of north-western India in ancient times differed from that of the present day.

Saraswati — the Lifestream of Vedic Civilisation

The Rigveda mentions the Saraswati more often than any other river. She is called not merely a river, but 'Nadītamā' — the foremost among rivers.

ambitame nadītame devitame sarasvati.

(Rigveda 2.41.16)

In this mantra, Saraswati is honoured in three forms at once — as Mother, as the foremost river, and as Goddess.

According to Rigvedic descriptions, the Saraswati flowed from the Himalayas westward, reaching all the way to the sea. On her banks developed the hermitages of many sages, sites of sacrifice, and centres of Vedic learning. Many historians therefore regard the Saraswati as the lifeline of Vedic civilisation.

The Ancient Westward Flow of the Yamuna

At present, the river Yamuna flows through Delhi, Mathura, and Agra before joining the Ganga at Prayagraj. But geological research suggests that, in extremely ancient times, some channels of the Yamuna also flowed westward and were likely connected with the Saraswati river system.

Sediment studies and OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) tests carried out in the Kaithal and Karnal regions of Haryana have been used to estimate the age of

ancient river courses. These studies have led to the conclusion that certain ancient streams descending from the Himalayas kept changing their course over time.

It is for this reason that many geologists hold that the river system of north-western India kept changing across different periods, a change that also affected the river Saraswati.

The Connection between the Sutlej and the Saraswati

Today the river Sutlej flows through Punjab and joins the Indus in Pakistan, but numerous geological studies have suggested the possibility that, in ancient times, some channels of the Sutlej flowed towards the Ghaggar-Hakra system, which many researchers connect with the Saraswati river system.

Zircon dating, sediment analysis, and studies of Himalayan minerals conducted by international researchers indicate that major changes occurred in river courses in ancient times. Because of these changes, the water source of the Saraswati gradually diminished, and eventually its surface flow ceased altogether.

What Does Science Say?

Over the past three decades, numerous scientific institutions have studied the ancient river courses of north-western India. Chief among them are the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), IIT Kanpur, Kurukshetra University, and the geological research of various international universities.

These studies made use of modern techniques such as remote sensing, satellite imagery, ground-penetrating survey, sediment analysis, OSL dating, and isotope studies. This research made clear that vast ancient river courses remain preserved, even today, beneath the ground across many parts of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.

A Remarkable Confluence of the Vedas and Science

The most fascinating fact is this: the very regions described in the Rigveda, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas as lying on the banks of the Saraswati are the same regions in which modern scientific studies identify ancient river courses.

Although differing views exist within the scientific community regarding the origin, flow, and chronology of the Saraswati, there is nonetheless broad agreement that a vast river system once existed in north-western India, one that profoundly influenced the civilisation and culture of this region.

Part 3: The River Saraswati — the Truth of the Vedas Tested against Science

For thousands of years, many scholars regarded the Saraswati merely as a symbolic or mythological river of Vedic literature. But the scientific research that began in the latter half of the twentieth century challenged this view. Today, satellite imagery, geological surveys, archaeological excavations, and hydrological studies have made clear that a vast ancient river system once existed in north-western India, one that is connected with the Vedic Saraswati.

Although research continues within the scientific community regarding the complete course, chronology, and character of the river Saraswati, the evidence available so far has established this subject as a major field of modern scientific research.

ISRO's Remote-Sensing Study

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) mapped numerous ancient river courses, or palaeochannels, across Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat through satellite imagery and remote-sensing techniques.

These studies found, along with the Ghaggar-Hakra river system, numerous geomorphological markers pointing to the existence of a vast ancient river. Experts hold that these ancient river courses played an important part, over thousands of years, in the region's agriculture, human settlement, and civilisational development.

Water Still Beneath the Ground

Groundwater surveys carried out at numerous sites across Haryana have found sufficient quantities of fresh water beneath ancient river courses. These studies indicate that, where no river is visible on the surface today, the remains of ancient water channels still exist below ground. It is for this reason that studies on the revival of the Saraswati river have, from time to time, been undertaken by various government and scientific institutions.

The Contribution of Kurukshetra University

The Centre for Earth Science and Remote Sensing Research (CERSR) at Kurukshetra University has also carried out important research on the river Saraswati and the 48-Kos Kurukshetra region. A study of geological samples, sediment layers, and ancient river courses has led to the conclusion that the Kurukshetra region has, for thousands of years, remained continuously connected with human activity and a river system.

What Does Archaeology Tell Us?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has carried out excavations at numerous sites across Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. In particular, the archaeological remains recovered from sites such as Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Bhirrana (Haryana), and Kalibangan (Rajasthan) indicate that highly developed human civilisations existed in these regions in extremely ancient times.

These sites are located near the very ancient river courses that many researchers connect with the Saraswati river system. It is for this reason that many scholars today use the term 'Indus-Saraswati Civilisation' alongside the term 'Indus Civilisation'.

The Vedas and Modern Research

The Rigveda calls the Saraswati a great river, flowing from the Himalayas to the sea. Modern geological research, on the other hand, shows that the river system of north-western India in ancient times was far more extensive and complex than it is today.

While it is not yet possible to scientifically establish every Vedic description in precisely that form, it is nonetheless notable that much modern research presents intriguing parallels with certain important aspects of Vedic geography. This is why the river Saraswati has today become not merely a subject of religious faith, but a subject of research at the international level.

A Researcher's Reflection

When I first studied ISRO's satellite maps, the research papers of Kurukshetra University, and the excavation reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, a profound thought arose in my mind.

For years we read the description of the Saraswati in our Vedas and Puranas. Today science is attempting to understand those very facts afresh, with the aid of modern instruments.

As a soldier, I learned that evidence is necessary before any conclusion can be reached. As a historian too, this is my very principle — both faith and evidence must be respected. It is for this reason that, in this book, wherever religious tradition is mentioned, it has been presented as such; and wherever scientific research is available, it has been set out together with its own original findings. This is the impartial method of research.

Part 4: The Saraswati Civilisation, the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, and Historical Context

Many historians of the world today refer to the civilisation that developed on the banks of the river Saraswati as the 'Indus-Saraswati Civilisation'. This is because many of the principal Harappan-era cities of the Indian subcontinent have been found situated along the Ghaggar-Hakra (the probable Saraswati) river system.

Rakhigarhi — An Important Centre of Indian Civilisation

Rakhigarhi, situated in the Hisar district of Haryana, is one of the largest Harappan-era cities excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The town planning, drainage system, metal industry, bead-making, agriculture, and study of human skeletal remains recovered here make clear that a developed urban culture existed here around the third millennium BCE.

A DNA study (Shinde et al., Cell, 2019) conducted on a human skeleton recovered from Rakhigarhi (approximately 2500 BCE) attracted particular attention. This study found no Central Asian 'Steppe' ancestry in that individual's genome. Scholars differ in their interpretation of this finding — some archaeologists regard it as important evidence for reassessing the Aryan-migration theory, while many geneticists urge a cautious interpretation, noting that it rests on the genome of a single individual and constitutes limited evidence. In keeping with a balanced research perspective, this subject remains a

part of ongoing academic discussion, rather than the basis of any final conclusion.

Bhirrana — Evidence of the Earliest Settlement

Bhirrana, in Fatehabad district, is considered an extremely important site for the study of the Saraswati system. Excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India have yielded evidence here from the pre-Harappan and early Harappan periods. Pottery, fire-altars, residential structures, and agricultural remains found in this region point to an exceedingly ancient human settlement.

Kalibangan — Signs of Vedic Culture

The fire-altars, planned urban layout, ploughed-field markings, and religious structures recovered from Kalibangan in Rajasthan reflect the advanced development of Indian civilisation. Although scholars differ over whether the fire-altars can be directly connected with Vedic yajnas, this site remains extremely important for understanding the ancient cultural tradition of north-western India.

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra — A Living Heritage

According to the official 'guide to the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra' published by the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), a total of 182 tirthas are listed in this land, spread across the five districts of Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Panipat, and Karnal. The list concludes with '182. Ram Sharan Tirtha — Hathlana (associated with the Mahabharata)'. Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Pehowa (Prithudak), Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Kapil Muni Tirtha, and

many other tirthas continue to bear witness, even today, to the continuity of Vedic tradition.

The Seven Principal Forests

According to the Vamana Purana, the land of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra held seven principal forests, in which stood numerous hermitages of ancient sages and seers —

- Kamyaka Vana — Kamoda
- Aditi Vana — Abhimanyupur
- Vyasa Vana — Bastali
- Phalki Vana — Faral
- Surya Vana — Sajuma
- Sheet Vana — Sivan
- Madhuvana — Mohana

The hermitages situated within these forests are regarded as direct witnesses to this land's long tradition of penance. It is notable that these tirthas and forests are described, in various forms, in the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Naradiya Purana, and the Brahma Purana.

A Dialogue between the Vedas and Science

Today, research by ISRO, GSI, ASI, IIT Kanpur, Kurukshetra University, and other institutions shows that an ancient river system once existed in north-western India. On the other hand, the Rigveda, the Shatapatha Brahmana, and the Mahabharata describe this same region as the Saraswati, as a sacrificial ground, and as Dharmakshetra.

It would be more accurate to say that modern scientific research and ancient scripture present intriguing parallels on

many points, although full scientific consensus on every question is still developing. This balanced perspective is the hallmark of a work of research.

Principal References

Vedic and Ancient Texts

- The Rigveda (particularly the River Hymn and the Saraswati Hymn)
- The Shatapatha Brahmana
- The Taittiriya Samhita
- The Mahabharata — Vana Parva, Udyoga Parva, Shalya Parva, Anushasana Parva
- The Vamana Purana
- The Skanda Purana
- The Naradiya Purana
- The Brahma Purana
- The Padma Purana
- The Valmiki Ramayana

Modern Research and Institutions

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — Rakhigarhi, Bhirrana, and Kalibangan Excavation Reports.
- Geological Survey of India (GSI) — Palaeochannel Studies.
- ISRO–NRSC — River Saraswati: An Integrated Study.
- Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) — 48 Kos Kurukshetra: Tirtha Guide (Official Documentation, 182 Tirthas).
- Kurukshetra University — Centre for Earth Science and Remote Sensing Research (CERSR).
- IIT Kanpur — Palaeo-Yamuna and OSL Dating Research Papers.

- Shinde, V. et al. — "An Ancient Harappan Genome Lacks Ancestry from Steppe Pastoralists or Iranian Farmers," Cell, 2019.
- Peter D. Clift et al. — Geology and other research papers (Sutlej–Ghaggar System).
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Chapter 4

Shri Audumbaracharya and Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha

The Tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya on the Sacred Land of Kurukshetra

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Shri Audumbaracharya — The Acharya Tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya

Introduction

The sacred land of the 48-kos Kurukshetra has not been merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata War; it has also been an important centre of India's ancient spiritual traditions. This region is mentioned repeatedly in the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and the medieval saint-traditions. This land has also had a deep connection with the Vaishnava sampradayas.

Shri Audumbaracharya, described within the acharya tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya, is said to be connected with the village of Papnawa, in the present-day district of Karnal, near Kurukshetra. This fact is recorded in the sampradaya's traditional text, 'Shri Acharya Parampara Parichay,' which is a primary source based on the sampradaya's own list of acharyas.

The purpose of this chapter is not to construct any new narrative, but to present this historical connection as it stands,

on the basis of the available texts, the sampradaya's tradition, and direct observation — and, wherever the evidence is internal to the sampradaya, this has been clearly marked as such.

A Brief Introduction to the Nimbarka Sampradaya

The Nimbarka Sampradaya is one of the ancient traditions among the four Vaishnava sampradayas. It is also called the Hansa Sampradaya, the Sanakadi Sampradaya, or the Kumara Sampradaya. According to the sampradaya's own tradition, the stream of knowledge passed from Lord Shri Hansa to the Sanakadi sages, from them to the divine sage Narada, and thence to Jagadguru Shri Nimbarkacharya.

Jagadguru Shri Nimbarkacharya propounded the philosophy of Dvaitadvaita (Bhedabheda) and accorded special importance to the joint worship of Radha and Krishna. Today, followers of this sampradaya are found across many states of India, as well as in Nepal and other countries.

Shri Audumbaracharya

Shri Audumbaracharya holds an exceedingly venerable place in the acharya tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya. According to the sampradaya's texts, he was one of the principal disciples of Jagadguru Shri Nimbarkacharya. It is notable that citations from Audumbaracharya's own compositions are found within the sampradaya's own publications, which lends support to his historical and traditional standing.

The 'Shri Acharya Parampara Parichay' mentions, concerning him —

> *"Works composed by Shri Audumbaracharya — the Audumbara Samhita, the Vratapanchaka, and the Shri Nimbarka Stotra. Place of residence — the village of Papnawa, near Kurukshetra, district Karnal."*

This record is important evidence that the acharya tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya has had a connection with the Kurukshetra region. This evidence rests on a source internal to the sampradaya; independent, sampradaya-neutral historical research on this subject remains limited, and this is precisely what leaves it an open subject for future researchers.

Its Significance from a Research Perspective

Kurukshetra is generally connected with the Mahabharata and the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, but the traditional sources of the Nimbarka Sampradaya indicate that this region was also an important centre of medieval Vaishnava spiritual practice.

Although independent historical material on the life of Shri Audumbaracharya is available only in limited measure, his mention within the sampradaya's authoritative acharya tradition nonetheless makes this subject exceedingly significant from a research perspective.

Principal References

- Shri Acharya Parampara Parichay, Pt. Shri Kishoredasji, Nimbarka Tirtha, Salemabad (Rajasthan) — a primary source internal to the sampradaya.

- The acharya tradition published by Shri Nimbarkacharya Peeth, Nimbarka Tirtha, Salemabad.
- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva.
- Kurukshetra Development Board — 48 Kos Tirtha Guide.

Part 3: Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha — A Local Tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya

Within the sacred 48-kos circuit of Kurukshetra are many tirthas that find mention in the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and local traditions. One such tirtha is Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha (near the village of Seenk/Sink-Pathri in Panipat district), which local tradition within the Nimbarka Sampradaya regards as an ancient centre of spiritual practice.

According to the sampradaya's tradition, this site is held to be connected with Swami Swabhuramdevacharya, who is counted among the senior disciples of Jagadguru Shri Harivyasdevacharya. According to tradition, he was born at Budhiya Bani (near present-day Jagadhri, in Yamunanagar district), and his disciples established the sampradaya's influence across the Haryana and Kurukshetra region.

Editorial clarification: the most detailed available account of Swabhuramdevacharya and Budhiya Bani, as described above, is found in an article previously published by the author himself. It is therefore presented not as independent third-party historical evidence, but as the sampradaya's oral/local tradition together with the author's own field research. Maintaining this distinction is necessary for the impartiality of a work of research.

At Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha, the Shri Radha-Krishna temple, the seat (gaddi) of its saints, and marks of ancient religious tradition remain in evidence to this day. Regular worship and religious observances are conducted here by local saints and mahants, keeping this tradition alive even now.

The official tirtha guide of the Kurukshetra Development Board lists a comparable tirtha, 'Machkuk Yaksha', in the village of Seenk, district Panipat (serial number 142). It is notable that the KDB list records the place-name as 'Seenk', while local tradition also uses the name 'Sink-Pathri' — the two appear to be differing pronunciations of the same place, though final confirmation of this would require local revenue records.

I myself have visited this tirtha on numerous occasions. On reaching there, one feels that history does not reside in books alone; it also lives on in temples, ancient trees, sacred lakes, and the tradition of saints. The conservation of such places is not merely a religious duty; it is also the protection of our cultural heritage.

Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha points to a connection between the Nimbarka Sampradaya and Kurukshetra on which further independent historical research is still called for. Sites of this kind show future generations that the history of the Vaishnava tradition was not confined to Vrindavan or Rajasthan alone, but also had roots in this sacred land of Haryana.

References

- Shri Acharya Parampara Parichay, Pt. Shri Kishoredasji, Shri Nimbarka Tirtha, Salemabad (Rajasthan).
- 48 Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide, Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), serial no. 142.
- Haryana Tourism Department — published material concerning the tirthas of Kurukshetra.
- The author's direct field visits and site observation, together with the sampradaya's local tradition (marked as an oral source).

Part 4: Machkuk Yaksha and the Yaksha Prashna — The Supreme Test of Dharma

Among the four yakshas described in the 48-kos circuit of Kurukshetra, Machkuk (Machkruk) Yaksha holds a special place. The 48-Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide published by the Kurukshetra Development Board places it near the village of Seenk, district Panipat (serial number 142). This place is known today as Yaksha Tirtha.

The celebrated episode of the Yaksha Prashna, described in the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, is regarded in Indian culture as the supreme test of dharma, truth, wisdom, and justice. Although the Mahabharata does not explicitly name this yaksha as Machkruk, local tradition at Kurukshetra and the tradition of the 48-kos tirthas hold this tirtha to be connected with Machkruk Yaksha. This episode should therefore be understood in the context of local tradition, rather than as a direct statement of the original text of the Mahabharata.

The Story of the Yaksha Prashna

In the final years of their exile, the Pandavas were once wandering through the Dvaita forest. Overcome by great exertion and heat, all of them grew intensely thirsty. They went forward in search of water, and soon a beautiful, clear, and tranquil lake came into view.

Sahadeva was the first to go to fetch water. As he began to drink, an unseen voice spoke —

"O prince! Answer my questions before you drink this water. Otherwise this water shall prove fatal to you."

Sahadeva disregarded the voice and drank the water. He at once fell unconscious upon the ground. When Sahadeva did not return, Nakula went to look for him, then Arjuna, then Bhimasena — each of them disregarded the warning in turn and likewise fell unconscious.

At last Dharmaraja Yudhishthira arrived there. He saw his four brothers lying unconscious upon the ground. At that moment the same divine voice was heard once again —

"O Yudhishthira! This lake is mine. Answer my questions first, and only then take the water."

Yudhishthira replied with great humility —

"O divine one! Ask your questions. Whatever answers I know, in accordance with dharma, I shall surely give."

There followed a profound dialogue between the Yaksha and Yudhishthira on dharma, truth, knowledge, life, death, duty,

friendship, charity, liberation, and the purpose of human life. In the Mahabharata tradition, this dialogue is held to comprise a total of 124 questions and their answers.

Some Notable Questions and Answers

The Yaksha asked, "What is heavier than the earth?" Yudhishthira answered, "A mother is heavier than the earth."

The Yaksha asked, "What is higher than the sky?" Yudhishthira said, "A father is higher than the sky."

The Yaksha asked, "What is a person's greatest wealth?" The answer came, "Contentment is the greatest wealth of all."

Then the Yaksha asked the question that became an immortal line of Indian philosophy — "Kimāścaryam?" — that is, what is the greatest wonder in the world?

"That, day after day, a person sees countless beings going to their death, and yet believes himself to be immortal — what greater wonder could there be than this."

Hearing this answer, the Yaksha was greatly pleased. He revealed his true form — he was Dharmadeva, who was also Yudhishthira's father. Pleased by Yudhishthira's devotion to dharma, his patience, and his commitment to truth, he restored all four Pandavas to life and blessed them for the remainder of their exile.

This episode is not merely a mythological tale; it is a superb example of Indian philosophy. It teaches that wisdom matters

more than force, patience more than anger, and dharma more than entitlement.

References

- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Yaksha Prashna Upaparva (Gita Press edition).
- 48 Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide, Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), serial no. 142.
- The Vamana Purana, Kurukshetra Mahatmya.
- The Skanda Purana, Kurukshetra Mahatmya.
- The author's direct field visits and study of local traditions (marked as an oral/local source).

Part 5: A Soldier-Historian's Experience, the Need for Conservation, and Conclusion

The journey to Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha has, for me, been more than a religious pilgrimage; it has been an opportunity for direct encounter with the history of my own sampradaya. As a soldier, I guarded India's borders; but as a historian, I have come to feel that the protection of our cultural and spiritual heritage is no less necessary.

I have visited this tirtha many times, engaging there with its temple, its lake, its ancient traditions, and its local saints. Each visit has made it clear that history lives on not only in texts, but also in the soil of tirthas, in temples, in sacred lakes, and in the tradition of saints.

Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha remains, to this day, a living centre of the tradition of the Nimbarka Sampradaya. The Shri Radha-

Krishna temple here, the seat of its saints, and its religious atmosphere are indications that this place has been a centre of Vaishnava spiritual practice. Yet, like many ancient tirthas, this place too, with time, stands in need of conservation and development.

In particular, the scientific conservation of this region's ancient lakes, water structures, and historical remains is necessary. If these heritages are not properly maintained in time, future generations will read of them only in books, without ever seeing their actual form. It is therefore the joint responsibility of the government, the archaeology department, the Kurukshetra Development Board, religious institutions, and society as a whole to conserve these heritages.

The history of the Nimbarka Sampradaya is not confined to Rajasthan, Vrindavan, or Braj alone. According to tradition, its acharyas also practised spiritual discipline and propagated dharma upon this land of Haryana. Names such as Shri Audumbaracharya and Swabhuramdevacharya point to this possible historical connection, on which independent research is still called for.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to construct any new belief, but to bring forward, on the basis of the available texts, the traditions of the sampradaya, and direct field study, those historical indications on which the expected independent research has not yet been undertaken. If this endeavour inspires future researchers towards further inquiry in this direction, I shall consider my labour successful.

As a soldier, I learned that the defence of a nation does not rest at its borders alone; the defence of its culture, history, and faith is equally necessary. It is in this very spirit that I have taken up the pen.

May Asthal Tirkhu Tirtha, the tradition of Shri Audumbaracharya, and the glorious heritage of the Nimbarka Sampradaya remain a source of inspiration for generations to come — this is the message of this chapter, and my heartfelt wish.

References

- Shri Acharya Parampara Parichay, Pt. Shri Kishoredasji, Shri Nimbarka Tirtha, Salemabad (Rajasthan).
- 48 Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide, Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB).
- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva (Yaksha Prashna Upaparva), Gita Press, Gorakhpur.
- The Vamana Purana, Kurukshetra Mahatmya.
- Material concerning the tirthas published by the Haryana Tourism Department and the Kurukshetra Development Board.
- The author's direct field study and pilgrimage visits (clearly marked as an oral/local source).

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Chapter 5

Sannihit Sarovar — The Legend of the Moksha Tirtha

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Sannihit Sarovar — Held to Be the Confluence of All Tirthas

If, within the sacred 48-kos circuit of Kurukshetra, Brahma Sarovar is regarded as the great symbol of faith, then Sannihit Sarovar is held to be the foremost tirtha of liberation, ancestral rites, and offerings to the departed. For thousands of years it has been believed that, on every amavasya (new-moon day), all the tirthas of the earth come here invisibly and gather together. It is for this reason that this place is held to be exceedingly sacred in Sanatan tradition.

The word 'Sannihit' derives from a Sanskrit root meaning to draw near, to gather together, or to be present alongside. This is why this tirtha came to be named Sannihit Sarovar. In ancient texts it is also referred to as Sannihit Tirtha, Sannihiti Sarovar, and, in some local traditions, Sannehit Sarovar.

The religious significance of Kurukshetra is not confined to the Mahabharata War or the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita alone. This land has, since the Vedic age, been a leading centre of the culture of yajna, penance, ancestral rites, and pilgrimage. Sannihit Sarovar is a living symbol of that very ancient

tradition, where, even today, devotees come from within India and abroad to perform tarpan, pind-daan, and shraddha for their ancestors.

The most ancient and authentic mention of Sannihit Sarovar is found in the Kurukshetra Mahatmya of the Vamana Purana. There, describing the boundary of this tirtha, it is stated —

"rantukādaujasaṁ yāvat pāvanāc ca caturmukham.
saraḥ sannihitaṁ proktaṁ brahmaṇā pūrvam eva tu.."

(Vamana Purana 1/5)

Meaning: this sacred lake, extending from Rantuka to Ojas and from Pavana to Chaturmukha, was itself named Sannihit Sarovar by Brahma in ancient times.

This reference is not merely a matter of religious faith; it also indicates something of the ancient geographical structure of Kurukshetra. Even today, the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) cites this very verse in its official publications, placing Sannihit Sarovar among the principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

According to religious belief, all tirthas arrive here on the day of amavasya. Bathing, charity, shraddha, and ancestral tarpan performed on this day are therefore held to be especially meritorious. It is for this reason that, throughout the year — and particularly on Somvati Amavasya, during a solar eclipse, and during Pitru Paksha — lakhs of devotees gather here.

The Sannihit Sarovar of today is located on Pehowa Road in the town of Kurukshetra, Haryana. Being close to Kurukshetra University and Brahma Sarovar, it is readily accessible to pilgrims. Despite the development of modern facilities, its religious dignity remains unimpaired to this day.

Sannihit Sarovar is thus not merely a body of water, but a living symbol of Indian pilgrimage tradition, ancestral rites, and Vedic culture. Its glory, sustained for thousands of years, remains alive today with the same devotion as it held in the time of the Puranas.

References

- The Vamana Purana, Kurukshetra Mahatmya, 1/5.
- Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) — official publications concerning the 48-Kos Kurukshetra and Sannihit Sarovar.
- Tirtha descriptions published by the Government of Haryana, Kurukshetra Development Board.

Part 2: The Glory of Sannihit Sarovar in the Puranic Tradition and the Tradition of Ancestral Shraddha

The significance of Sannihit Sarovar is not confined to local folk tradition alone; it is also mentioned in Puranic literature. In the Puranic tradition, this tirtha is counted among the foremost tirthas for ancestral shraddha, tarpan, and the bestowal of liberation. This makes clear that, in ancient India too, Sannihit Sarovar was regarded as exceedingly sacred.

Within the tradition of the Padma Purana, it is stated in substance that a devotee who bathes in Sannihit Sarovar at the time of amavasya or a solar eclipse, and performs the shraddha of their ancestors, obtains merit equal to that of a thousand Ashvamedha yajnas.

Editorial clarification: the precise chapter number of the verse above could not be independently verified. It has therefore been presented as "according to the tradition of the Padma Purana", rather than cited with a specific chapter and verse number. Before final publication, this verse and its exact reference should be checked against a copy of the original Padma Purana (Adi Khanda).

This belief underlies the ancient tradition of Sannihit Sarovar, according to which ancestral tarpan, pind-daan, and shraddha performed here are held to be especially fruitful. It is for this reason that devotees arrive here from various states of the country in memory of their forebears.

Another distinctive tradition of Sannihit Sarovar is connected with its tirtha-priests, the Panda community. For generations, many families have had their lineage, gotra, and shraddha-related particulars recorded in the genealogical registers of these priests. These registers preserve details of many families going back several generations. Such genealogies are considered of particular importance in the study of social and cultural history.

The Kurukshetra Development Board also notes, in its official publications, that Sannihit Sarovar is a principal site for

ancestral shraddha, and that the traditional practice of genealogical record-keeping remains alive here to this day.

From a religious standpoint, this place sees especially large crowds on the occasions of amavasya, Somvati Amavasya, a solar eclipse, Pitru Paksha, and Mahalaya Amavasya. On these occasions, devotees bathe, perform tarpan, give charity, and observe shraddha, expressing their gratitude towards their ancestors.

In Sanatan Dharma, reverence for one's ancestors is regarded not merely as a religious ritual, but as a symbol of one's responsibility towards family, lineage, and culture. Sannihit Sarovar is a living centre of this very eternal tradition, where faith and custom continue to flow without interruption to this day.

References

- The tradition of the Padma Purana (final verification of chapter and verse number pending).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) — official publications concerning Sannihit Sarovar and the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.
- The traditional archival system of Kurukshetra concerning the genealogical tradition of the tirtha-priests.
- Tirtha literature published by the Government of Haryana, Kurukshetra Development Board.

Part 3: The Present Sannihit Sarovar, the Kurukshetra Development Board, and My Five Pilgrimages

The glory of Sannihit Sarovar is not confined to ancient texts alone. Even today, its religious, cultural, and historical significance remains just as strong. The Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), established by the Government of Haryana, has played an important role in the conservation, development, and historical documentation of this tirtha.

The Kurukshetra Development Board was established by the Government of Haryana on 1 August 1968. Its first chairman was the late Bharat Ratna Gulzarilal Nanda. The Board undertook the survey, classification, and conservation of the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra — according to the KDB's official '48 Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide', this number presently stands at a total of 182 tirthas, among which Sannihit Sarovar is counted as one of the principal tirthas.

According to the Board, Sannihit Sarovar is located on Pehowa Road, Thanesar (Kurukshetra). It lies close to Kurukshetra University and Brahma Sarovar, and, being situated approximately three kilometres from Kurukshetra Junction Railway Station, is readily accessible to devotees arriving from within India and abroad.

At present, paved ghats, a circumambulatory path, lighting arrangements, bathing facilities for devotees, and the provisions necessary for religious observances have been developed around the lake. On the occasions of amavasya,

Somvati Amavasya, Pitru Paksha, and a solar eclipse, lakhs of devotees gather here for bathing, tarpan, and shraddha.

My Five Journeys — A Pilgrim's Experience

My connection with Sannihit Sarovar is not one of study alone; it is also one of devotion and direct experience. I have had the good fortune of visiting this sacred tirtha on five occasions.

First journey — 12 December 2023. On this journey I was accompanied by my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, and my grandson, Bhavesh Swami. We rested for the night at the Vairagi Dharamshala, Birla Mandir Chowk, Thanesar, which lies close to Sannihit Sarovar. The experience of bathing and darshan in the tranquil atmosphere of the lake that morning was deeply spiritual.

Second journey — 13 May 2024. This time I was accompanied by Master Jagbir Vaishnav. We took darshan of the lake and gathered information about the ancient traditions of this tirtha from the tirtha-priests present there.

Third journey — 18 December 2024. On this journey my wife, Nirmala Vaishnav, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, were with me. Being present at this sacred tirtha with my family was, for me, a deeply emotional experience. I introduced the coming generation to the history and significance of this tirtha.

Fourth journey — 13 May 2025. This time I arrived at this tirtha alone. Sitting in the tranquil atmosphere of the lake,

away from the crowds, I realised that a tirtha is not merely an outward journey, but a journey of the soul as well.

Fifth journey — 13 May 2026. This was my fifth journey. On this occasion too I reverently remembered my ancestors and prayed for the conservation of this sacred land. According to the records of the Vairagi Dharamshala, this date holds special significance, being connected with the death anniversary of its founding Mahant, on which occasion members of the community gather for religious programmes and a communal feast (bhandara).

Editorial note: the second, fourth, and fifth journeys are all recorded on the date of "13 May" (in 2024, 2025, and 2026 respectively). Since this date is stated to be connected with the death anniversary of the founding Mahant of the Vairagi Dharamshala, this recurrence may well be natural — nevertheless, the author is once again requested to confirm these dates, so that no inadvertent typographical error remains in the book.

These five journeys made it clear to me that Sannihit Sarovar is not merely a historical body of water, but a living centre of devotion, memory, and Indian culture. Each journey further strengthened, within me, a sense of respect for my ancestors, faith in the Sanatan tradition, and a sense of responsibility for the conservation of this invaluable heritage.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) — 48 Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide (182 tirthas) and official publications concerning Sannihit Sarovar.
- Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board Act, and the Board's historical records.
- Internal records of the Vairagi Dharamshala, Thanesar (Kurukshetra), concerning the tradition associated with 13 May.
- The author's direct pilgrimage visits and field observations (2023–2026).

Chapter 6

Nabhikamal Tirtha, Thanesar — The Site of Brahma's Manifestation

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Nabhikamal Tirtha — The Sacred Memory of the Beginning of Creation

Within the sacred 48-kos circuit of Kurukshetra are many tirthas mentioned in the Vedas, the Puranas, and local traditions. Among these, Nabhikamal Tirtha holds an exceedingly distinctive place. This tirtha is not merely a centre of religious faith; it is a symbol of that ancient Puranic tradition, tied to the Sanatan vision of creation, in which Brahma is described as manifesting upon a lotus that sprang from Lord Vishnu's navel, and thereupon beginning the work of creation.

This sacred tirtha is located in the town of Thanesar (ancient Sthaneshwar), Haryana. According to the official accounts of the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) and the International Gita Mahotsav, this site lies on the Thanesar-Bagthala road, to the south of Raja Harsh's fort, in the western part of the town of Thanesar. Both official sources present this geographical description in virtually identical terms, which fully corroborates its authenticity.

One fact particularly worth noting in the study of this history is that the ancient name of present-day 'Thanesar' was 'Sthaneshwar' (Sthanvishwar). Over time, through the natural evolution of language, 'Sthaneshwar' was corrupted into the name 'Thanesar', which came into common use. Sthaneshwar and Thanesar are therefore not two separate places, but two historical names of the very same town. This fact is accepted in numerous historical sources as well as in Hindi encyclopaedic literature.

According to Sanatan tradition, Nabhikamal Tirtha is connected with that divine pastime of Lord Vishnu when he lay in yoga-nidra (divine slumber) upon the Ocean of Milk. From his navel there emerged a divine lotus, and upon that very lotus the Creator, Brahma, manifested. By Lord Vishnu's command, Brahma began his work of creation from this very place. This account is presented as a matter of religious belief in various Puranas and in the official literature of the Kurukshetra Development Board.

It is worth noting that this account is accepted not as historical fact, but as a Puranic tradition of Sanatan Dharma. For this reason, in scholarly writing, it is considered more appropriate — and academically more correct — to present it with phrases such as "it is believed", "according to the Puranas", or "according to Sanatan tradition".

The Bharatkosh and interpretations of the Padma Purana likewise state that it is because of the lotus that emerged from Lord Vishnu's navel that this Purana came to be named the

'Padma Purana' — for in Sanskrit, 'Padma' means lotus. The story of Nabhikamal is thus not confined to the origin of Brahma alone; it is also connected with the naming tradition of Sanatan literature.

Nabhikamal Tirtha thus serves as a remarkable spiritual bridge between four elements — creation, Brahma, Vishnu, and Kurukshetra. It is for this reason that it holds a place of great honour and reverence within the tirtha tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Nabhi Kamal Tirth, Thanesar (official publication).
- International Gita Mahotsav — Nabhi Kamal Tirth (official description).
- Bharatkosh — Brahma (Puranic account concerning the origin from Nabhikamal).
- The Padma Purana (Hindi commentary) — the naming of 'Padma' and the Nabhikamal tradition.
- Historical accounts concerning Sthaneshwar (Thanesar) — Hindi encyclopaedic and historical references.

Part 2: The Ashtakosi Parikrama, History, and the Author's Direct Experience

The significance of Nabhikamal Tirtha lies not only in its being regarded as the site of Brahma's manifestation, but also in its being the starting and concluding point of Kurukshetra's ancient Ashtakosi Parikrama (eight-kos circumambulation).

According to the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) of the Government of Haryana, this parikrama, which sets out on Krishna Chaturdashi of the month of Chaitra, begins at Nabhikamal Tirtha, proceeds through a visit to numerous principal tirthas, and concludes once again at this very place. This tradition makes clear that, since ancient times, Nabhikamal Tirtha has been regarded as the centre of Kurukshetra's religious life.

The route of the parikrama traditionally includes the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, the Kartikeya Temple, Kubera Ghat, Saraswati Ghat, Rantuka (Tarantuka) Yaksha, Banganga, Bhishma Kund, and other important tirthas. The interconnection of all these tirthas binds the religious and cultural heritage of Kurukshetra into a single thread. Nabhikamal Tirtha is the spiritual centre of this entire circuit.

The fort (mound) of Raja Harsh, situated near Nabhikamal Tirtha, further adds to the historical significance of this region. According to archaeological surveys, multiple cultural strata are found here, said to include remains from the Kushana, Gupta, and Vardhana periods.

Editorial clarification: independent verification of the original ASI excavation report, for a precise list of the periods found at the fort (Kushana/Gupta/Vardhana/late Mughal), could not be obtained. If the report becomes available before final publication, the precise years and references should be added.

This makes clear that this region has been an important centre not only of religious life, but also of ancient urban civilisation.

According to historians, Sthaneshwar (present-day Thanesar) was the original capital of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. Emperor Harshavardhana governed his kingdom from here in the early years of his reign, before later shifting his capital to Kannauj. Thanesar's significance is therefore of great importance not only from a religious standpoint, but also in the political development of Indian history.

The present structure of the temple is built in the North Indian Nagara style. Its shikhara rises in a conical form, providing a fine example of the traditional temple architecture of northern India. It has been restored from time to time, but its religious identity remains preserved today with the very same devotion.

The Author's Direct Experience

I have had the good fortune of visiting Nabhikamal Tirtha on numerous occasions. In particular, my visits of 12 March 2017 and 18 December 2025 remain deeply memorable to me. On the second of these journeys, my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, was with me as well. When I reached the temple complex that morning, the atmosphere was exceedingly tranquil and spiritual. Devotees were absorbed in worship, and the sound of Vedic mantras echoed throughout the temple precincts.

I cannot recall how many times in my life I have visited Kurukshetra; the number is beyond counting. Whenever I come to this sacred land, I feel as though history, the Puranas, and the present moment stand together before me all at once. Nabhikamal Tirtha is just such a place, where the primal story of creation remains alive, even today, as an article of faith.

The road distance from my village, Ramnagar (Gannaur, district Sonipat), to Nabhikamal Tirtha is approximately 128 kilometres, which I measured myself using Google Maps. Each journey has been, for me, not merely an occasion for darshan, but an opportunity to reconnect with my Sanatan tradition and cultural heritage.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana), Nabhi Kamal Tirth.
- International Gita Mahotsav, official description — Nabhi Kamal Tirth.
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — excavation details concerning Thanesar and Raja Harsh's mound (precise report reference to be added before final publication).
- Wikipedia (for general reference to historical names and the Pushyabhuti dynasty only; the principal basis remains government and archaeological sources).
- The author's direct travel experience (12 March 2017 and 18 December 2025).

Part 3: Conclusion — The Memory of Creation and the Eternal Message of Sanatan Dharma

Nabhikamal Tirtha is not merely an ancient temple or place of pilgrimage. It is a symbol, within Sanatan tradition, of that sacred memory of the beginning of creation, tied to the belief that Brahma manifested upon a lotus that arose from Lord Vishnu's navel. It is for this reason that this place holds a distinctive position among the principal tirthas of Kurukshetra.

From a religious standpoint, this tirtha is connected with the Puranic tradition of the creation of the universe, while, from a cultural standpoint, it is the starting and concluding point of Kurukshetra's Ashtakosi Parikrama. Raja Harsh's fort, situated nearby, likewise attests to the historical significance of this region. Nabhikamal Tirtha thus presents a remarkable confluence of the Puranas, history, archaeology, and faith.

For me, the significance of this tirtha is not that of a researcher alone, but also that of a devotee. Whenever I come here, the same feeling arises within me — that Indian culture did not regard the origin of creation merely as a philosophical idea, but kept it alive by binding it to pilgrimage, tradition, and the values of life. This is why, even after thousands of years, this place continues to draw devotees with the very same reverence.

As a soldier, I have seen battlefields, and as a historian, I have studied many ancient sites. Yet, standing at Nabhikamal Tirtha, I feel that a person's true strength lies not in weapons alone, but in their culture, faith, and tradition of knowledge. It is this very tradition that has kept India alive through the ages.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to establish any religious belief as historical fact, but to bring together, in one place, these ancient beliefs, the available sources, and present-day government records, on the basis of which Nabhikamal Tirtha continues, even today, to be a centre of faith for crores of devotees.

If Kurukshetra is called Dharmakshetra, then Nabhikamal Tirtha is, within that Dharmakshetra, a symbol of the first chapter of creation. On coming here, one feels that the Sanatan tradition is not merely a memory of the past, but a living cultural stream that continues to give direction to the present and the future alike.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana), Nabhi Kamal Tirth.
- International Gita Mahotsav (Official Portal), Nabhi Kamal Tirth, Thanesar.
- Bharatkosh — Puranic accounts concerning Brahma and Nabhikamal.
- The Padma Purana (Hindi commentary) — the origin of Brahma and the naming of 'Padma'.
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — Thanesar and Raja Harsh's mound.
- The author's direct travel experience (12 March 2017 and 18 December 2025).

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Chapter 7

Brahmayoni Tirtha, Pehowa — The Site of the Establishment of Varnashrama Dharma

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: A Puranic and Geographical Introduction to Brahmayoni Tirtha

Within the sacred 48-kos land of Kurukshetra are many tirthas mentioned in the Vedas, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas. Among these tirthas, Brahmayoni Tirtha, situated at Pehowa, holds an exceedingly distinctive place. It is not merely a bathing tirtha; it is regarded as a principal tirtha connected with the establishment of the Varnashrama system described in Sanatan tradition. It is for this reason that its religious and philosophical significance appears distinct from that of many other tirthas.

Brahmayoni Tirtha is situated at Pehowa (district Kurukshetra), Haryana, on the bank of the ancient river Saraswati. According to the official records of the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), this site lies about 28 kilometres from the town of Kurukshetra. Pehowa itself has long been renowned by the ancient name of Prithudak, and, owing to its association with ancestral shraddha and the tirthas of the

Saraswati, has remained a principal centre for devotees for thousands of years.

Numerous tirthas connected with Brahma are mentioned in the Kurukshetra region, among which Brahmasar, Brahmasthan, Brahmodumbar, Brahma Tirtha, and Brahmayoni are particularly notable. All these tirthas are held to be connected with the traditions of creation and the worship of Brahma. Brahmayoni Tirtha is distinctive within this group because its identity is connected not only with Brahma the Creator, but also with the Vedic ordering of society.

This tirtha finds clear mention in the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, where it is stated —

"brahmayoniṁ samāsādya śuciḥ prayatamānasaḥ.
tatra snātvā naravyāghra brahmalokaṁ prapadyate..
punāty asaptamaṁ caiva kulaṁ nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ.."

(Mahabharata, Vana Parva 83/140–141)

Meaning: whoever bathes at Brahmayoni Tirtha with a pure and disciplined mind attains the world of Brahma, and secures the welfare of many generations of their lineage. This description conveys the spiritual significance of this tirtha. It should be understood not as historical fact, but as the religious mahatmya (glory) described in the Mahabharata.

The tradition of the Vamana Purana likewise mentions Brahmayoni Tirtha, according to which this tirtha was established by Brahma himself on the bank of the river Saraswati, near Prithudak.

Editorial clarification: the precise chapter-39/verse-21 reference for the Vamana Purana citation could not be independently verified, although the content (the establishment of the tirtha by Brahma in the Prithudak region) is fully consistent with the general style of the Vamana Purana. This reference should be checked against the original text before final publication.

This tradition further describes how, through Brahma's contemplation, the system of the four varnas and the four ashramas of society was established. It is for this reason that this place became renowned as the 'site of the establishment of Varnashrama Dharma' — a phrase also used in the Kurukshetra Development Board's own official publications. This is a Puranic and religious belief, and should be understood as such.

Brahmayoni Tirtha remains, even today, among the principal religious sites of Pehowa, and the Kurukshetra Development Board continues its conservation and documentation. This fact shows that this thousands-of-years-old tirtha tradition remains alive in the lives of devotees to this day.

References

- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Chapter 83, Verses 140–141.
- The tradition of the Vamana Purana (final verification of chapter and verse number pending).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Brahmayoni Tirth, Pehowa (official description).

Part 2: The Group of Tirthas at Pehowa and the Author's Direct Experience

The significance of Brahmayoni Tirtha is not confined to its Puranic mention alone. This tirtha is an integral part of the vast group of tirthas at Pehowa (ancient Prithudak), mentioned in the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, and other ancient texts. In this region, developed on the bank of the river Saraswati, numerous tirthas stand close to one another, together giving Pehowa its place among the leading pilgrimage regions of northern India.

According to the Kurukshetra Development Board, Saraswati Tirtha lies to the north of Brahmayoni Tirtha, and Prithudak Tirtha to its south. In the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, it is mentioned after Vishwamitra Tirtha, and in the Vamana Purana, after Prithudak Tirtha. This makes clear that, in ancient times, a well-ordered tradition existed among these tirthas.

The records of the Kurukshetra Development Board also note that bathing at Brahmayoni Tirtha on a Saturday is held to be especially meritorious. This belief forms part of local religious tradition, and even today many devotees come here to bathe and worship in keeping with this very faith.

The significance of the Pehowa region is not confined to a single tirtha. Since ancient times, this place has been a principal centre for ancestral shraddha, tarpan, and the worship of Saraswati. Even today, devotees arrive here from various states of the country to conduct religious observances

on behalf of their ancestors. In this way, Pehowa has established its identity as a distinctive religious centre within the pilgrimage tradition of Kurukshetra.

The Author's Direct Experience

I have had the good fortune of visiting Brahmayoni Tirtha on numerous occasions. I have come to this sacred tirtha with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, roughly ten times. This figure is an estimate based on memory, since it has not been possible to keep a separate record of journeys made continuously over the years.

On each journey, I have experienced the tranquil atmosphere of this bank of the Saraswati. On entering the tirtha precincts, a distinctive kind of reverence awakens within the mind. The atmosphere here appears more solemn and contemplative than at many other tirthas. Devotees can be seen absorbed in bathing, worship, and meditation.

Whenever I stand at Brahmayoni Tirtha, I feel that this is not merely an ancient religious site, but a symbol of that philosophical tradition of Indian culture which sought to organise society on the foundation of duty, discipline, and the values of life. Whether one views these Puranic accounts as a matter of faith or as cultural heritage, it is certain that this tirtha has held its place in the memory of Indian society for millennia.

For me, this journey has been more than an occasion for darshan; it has been an opportunity to reconnect with my

cultural roots. Each time I have come here, I have felt that the sacred land of Kurukshetra continues to hold, in silent keeping, its ancient history and spiritual tradition.

References

- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Chapter 83.
- The tradition of the Vamana Purana (final verification of chapter and verse number pending).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Brahmayoni Tirth, Pehowa.
- The author's direct travel experience (approximately ten journeys, including with Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav).

Part 3: Conclusion — Faith, Philosophy, and Cultural Heritage

Brahmayoni Tirtha, Pehowa, is not merely an ancient tirtha; it is a symbol of that philosophical idea, described in Sanatan tradition, according to which society was organised on the foundation of dharma, duty, and the ashrama system. Its mention in the Mahabharata (together with the tradition of the Vamana Purana) establishes the antiquity and religious importance of this tirtha, while the records of the Kurukshetra Development Board attest that this tirtha remains, even today, an important part of Kurukshetra's official pilgrimage tradition.

The Pehowa region is itself an ancient group of tirthas developed on the bank of the Saraswati. The presence of Brahmayoni, Prithudak, Saraswati Tirtha, and other sacred sites shows that this region has been a living centre not merely

of religious practice, but of the cultural and spiritual heritage of Indian civilisation.

As a researcher, my endeavour has been to present every fact, as far as possible, on the basis of government records, ancient texts, and direct observation. Wherever a subject rests on Puranic tradition, it has been presented as such; and wherever historical or geographical evidence is available, it has been clearly kept distinct. This method strengthens the credibility of any work of research.

I have made many journeys to this tirtha with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav. Each journey has made it clear to me that Kurukshetra is not merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata, but a living museum of the many dimensions of Indian culture. Here, every tirtha tells a different story, and Brahmayoni Tirtha is that chapter of the story which offers an opportunity to understand the relationship between society, dharma, and culture.

What is needed today is not merely the darshan of these tirthas, but also their conservation, documentation, and authentic study. Only when future generations become acquainted with the true history and tradition of these sites will this invaluable heritage remain secure.

It is in this very spirit that this chapter on Brahmayoni Tirtha comes to a close. It is not merely an introduction to a tirtha, but a remembrance of that cultural heritage which has given direction to Indian society for millennia.

References

- The Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Chapter 83, Verses 140–141.
- The tradition of the Vamana Purana (final verification of chapter and verse number pending).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Brahmayoni Tirth, Pehowa.
- Bharatkosh — general historical information available on Pehowa (Prithudak) and Saraswati.
- The author's direct travel experience (many journeys, including with his wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav).

Chapter 8

Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple and Brahma Sarovar — The Primordial Shivling and the Cradle of Civilisation

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Sthaneshwar Mahadev — Its Ancient Name, Significance, and the Tradition of the Primordial Shivling

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, situated on the sacred land of Kurukshetra, is among those ancient tirthas of Sanatan tradition mentioned in numerous religious and historical sources. This temple is located in present-day Thanesar (Kurukshetra, Haryana), directly opposite the world-renowned Brahma Sarovar. The combined significance of these two tirthas is regarded as the foundation of Kurukshetra's spiritual identity.

The Etymology of the Name Sthaneshwar

The word 'Sthaneshwar' is formed from the Sanskrit 'Sthanu' and 'Ishwar'. Sthanu is an ancient name of Lord Shiva, meaning immovable, eternal, and imperishable. In ancient texts, this region is named Sthanvishwar, which, over time, was corrupted into Thanesar. Present-day Thanesar and ancient Sthaneshwar are thus two names of the very same historical town.

This account is uniformly available in the sources of the Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana), Incredible India (Government of India), and other historical sources.

The Religious Belief Concerning the Primordial Shivling

According to Sanatan tradition, it was at this very place that Prajapati Brahma established the Sthanu Linga of Lord Shiva. Religious belief holds that the worship of the Shivling began right here, and it is for this reason that this place is connected with the tradition of the primordial Shivling.

It is necessary to clarify that this is a religious belief, not a historically established event. Nevertheless, this tradition is found consistently across numerous ancient texts, local beliefs, and the official descriptions of the Kurukshetra Development Board.

It is for this reason that the belief still prevails that a pilgrimage to Kurukshetra is not considered complete without the darshan of Sthaneshwar Mahadev.

Mentions in Ancient Literature

The Sthaneshwar region is mentioned not only in the Puranas, but in Buddhist literature as well. The Buddhist text Mahavagga mentions a Brahmin region called 'Thuna', situated on the western boundary of Madhyadesha, while the Divyavadana describes a place called 'Sthuna' (Upasthuna). Scholars (particularly following Cunningham's 'Ancient Geography of India') have identified both these names directly

with Sthanvishwar (present-day Thanesar), which confirms that this region was well known even in the Buddhist era as the western boundary of Madhyadesha.

Similarly, the tradition of the Vamana Purana also describes the special mahatmya of Sthanu Tirtha, according to which countless Shivlings exist around this tirtha, and their darshan destroys sin.

Editorial clarification: the precise chapter and verse reference for this description in the Vamana Purana could not be independently verified. It should be checked against the original text before final publication.

Connection with the Mahabharata Tradition

According to popular tradition, before the beginning of the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna brought the Pandavas to this very place for the worship of Lord Shiva. Here the Pandavas received the blessing of victory, and thereafter set out for the righteous war.

This episode is found in local traditions, official tourism accounts, and numerous religious sources. It is accepted not as a historical event, but as an ancient religious tradition.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple.
- Incredible India (Government of India).
- Cunningham, Ancient Geography of India — the identification of Thuna/Sthuna with Sthanvishwar.

- The tradition of the Vamana Purana (final verification of chapter and verse number pending).

Part 2: The Temple's Architecture, Brahma Sarovar, and Historical Significance

The Present Form of the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple continues to keep its ancient religious tradition alive to this day. Although it has been restored and conserved from time to time, its fundamental religious identity remains unimpaired.

The temple's architecture is influenced by the North Indian Nagara style. Its shikhara is built in the traditional style, and the Shivling enshrined in the sanctum sanctorum is the principal object of devotees' worship. Besides Lord Shiva, temples of Lord Vishnu, Mother Durga, Shri Hanuman, and other deities are also established within the temple precincts. This makes this place a symbol not merely of a Shiva temple, but of the Sanatan tradition of worshipping multiple deities.

Local religious belief holds that the water of the ancient pond situated in front of the temple is exceedingly sacred. At present, a statue of Lord Nilkanth Mahadev is installed in the middle of the pond, and the ancient banyan tree nearby is a particular object of devotees' faith.

Brahma Sarovar — A Symbol of Creation and Civilisation

Brahma Sarovar, situated directly opposite the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, is the most renowned tirtha of Kurukshetra.

It is widely counted among Asia's largest man-made sacred lakes.

According to religious tradition, before beginning the work of creation, Lord Brahma performed a yajna in this very region, on account of which this lake came to be called Brahma Sarovar. Its mahatmya is described in numerous Puranas and in the Mahabharata. Devotees hold the belief that bathing and worship here destroy sin and confer spiritual merit.

Popular tradition also holds that King Kuru played an important part in the development of this region, and that this region came, in time, to be renowned by the name Kurukshetra after him. This account is found in religious and traditional sources.

Historical Significance

Brahma Sarovar is exceedingly important not only from a religious standpoint, but from a historical one as well.

The renowned eleventh-century scholar Al-Biruni, in his work Kitab-ul-Hind, mentioned Thanesar and the glory of the celebrated 'Chakraswamin' image there, making clear that this tirtha was, even in the medieval period, counted among the principal religious centres of the whole of India.

The tradition of vast fairs being held at Hindu tirthas on the occasion of a solar eclipse during the Mughal era is well known, and local tradition also mentions such fairs at Kurukshetra.

Editorial clarification: independent confirmation of any solid contemporary historical record (such as the Ain-i-Akbari) specifically concerning a journey to Kurukshetra during the reign of Emperor Akbar could not be obtained. This has therefore been presented in the context of the general Mughal-era fair tradition, rather than as a claim naming a specific emperor, until solid sources are found.

After Independence, the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board have carried out important work in the conservation, beautification, and development of the pilgrimage arrangements at this lake.

Today Brahma Sarovar is a principal centre for the International Gita Mahotsav, solar-eclipse bathing, and various religious observances, with lakhs of devotees arriving here every year from within India and abroad.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple and Brahma Sarovar.
- Government of Haryana — Kurukshetra District Official Website.
- Government of India — Incredible India.
- The tradition of the Vamana Purana (the mahatmya of Sthanu Tirtha and Brahma Sarovar; final verification of chapter and verse number pending).
- The Mahabharata (the episode of Kurukshetra's tirtha-mahatmya).
- Al-Biruni — Kitab-ul-Hind (11th century).

Part 3: The Author's Direct Experience, the Gita Mahotsav, and Conclusion

The Author's Direct Observation

I have had the good fortune of taking darshan of the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple and Brahma Sarovar on numerous occasions. For years, Kurukshetra has remained a principal centre of my research, study, and pilgrimage. Each visit here has given me the opportunity to understand, more closely still, the spiritual, historical, and cultural character of this land.

On 16 December 2025, on the occasion of the International Gita Mahotsav, I arrived once again at this sacred tirtha, together with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, and my grandson. At that time, Brahma Sarovar was illuminated with the extraordinary radiance of countless lamps, and thousands of devotees were taking part, with faith and devotion, in the Gita Jayanti celebrations.

After taking darshan at the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, when I beheld the ancient pond in front of the temple, the statue of Nilkanth Mahadev, and the vast banyan tree, I felt at once that this was not merely a temple, but a living witness to the Sanatan tradition that has continued for thousands of years.

The Krishna-Arjuna Chariot Memorial

The grand statue of Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna's chariot, installed within the Brahma Sarovar complex, is one of the

most striking religious memorials of the modern era. This memorial brings to life the memory of that historic moment when Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

During the Gita Mahotsav, this entire complex becomes suffused with a spiritual atmosphere. Devotees, saints, scholars, and researchers arriving from within India and abroad gather on this occasion to recall the universal message of the Gita. This festival, organised by the Government of Haryana, has today become Kurukshetra's identity on the world stage.

A Researcher's Reflection

As a researcher of history, when I study Sthaneshwar Mahadev and Brahma Sarovar, it becomes clear to me that religious tradition, historical memory, and modern conservation all exist here together.

Taking together the stories of the Puranas, the tirtha-mahatmya of the Mahabharata, the accounts of medieval travellers, and present-day government conservation, it becomes clear that this tirtha is not merely a matter of faith, but also important evidence of the continuity of Indian civilisation.

Conclusion

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple and Brahma Sarovar are two such pillars of Kurukshetra's spiritual identity whose

significance has remained unimpaired from ancient times to the present day.

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple represents the ancient tradition of the worship of Lord Shiva, while Brahma Sarovar is a symbol of the Sanatan tradition of creation, sacrifice, and dharma. Both tirthas remain conserved today by the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board, and continue to draw lakhs of devotees every year.

For me, this tirtha is not merely a subject of research, but such a confluence of faith, history, and culture that each visit becomes a source of new knowledge and new inspiration. This is why every stage of the journey to Kurukshetra draws me back, again and again, to this sacred land.

References

- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana) — Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple and Brahma Sarovar.
- Government of Haryana — Kurukshetra District Official Website.
- Government of India — Incredible India.
- The Mahabharata (the episode of tirtha-mahatmya).
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- Al-Biruni — Kitab-ul-Hind.
- The author's direct travel experience (many journeys, including the International Gita Mahotsav).

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Chapter 9

The Vardhana Dynasty and the Archaeological Heritage of Thanesar — From Prabhakaravardhana to Harshavardhana

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Introduction, the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) Dynasty, and the Historical Significance of Prabhakaravardhana

Introduction

Kurukshetra has been an important centre not only of the Mahabharata and the Gita, but also of the early medieval history of northern India. In the seventh century CE, this very region became renowned as the capital of the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) dynasty. This dynasty brought political stability to northern India and, under the reign of Emperor Harshavardhana, carried Indian culture, literature, and religion to new heights.

The historical identity of Kurukshetra is not confined to religious tradition alone. Harsh ka Tila, the site's archaeological excavations, Bhagwanpura, and other ancient sites here confirm that this region has been a centre of human civilisation for thousands of years. This chapter presents an integrated study of these very historical facts, archaeological evidence, and the author's direct observations.

The Historical Background of the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) Dynasty

The dynasty generally called the Vardhana dynasty in history is also known to most historians as the Pushyabhuti dynasty. Its capital was originally at Sthaneshwar (present-day Thanesar).

According to Banabhatta's Harshacharita and other historical sources, the principal rulers of this dynasty are held to have followed in this order — Naravardhana, Rajyavardhana I, Adityavardhana, Prabhakaravardhana, Rajyavardhana II, and Harshavardhana.

Among these rulers, Prabhakaravardhana holds a place of particular importance, for it was he who established this dynasty as a powerful, independent kingdom.

Prabhakaravardhana — The Architect of Independent Power

Prabhakaravardhana is regarded as the first influential and independent ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. He assumed royal titles such as 'Maharajadhiraja' and 'Parama-bhattaraka', which indicate his independent sovereignty — whereas the first three rulers had been confined to the title of 'Maharaja' alone.

His capital was Sthaneshwar (Thanesar). This very town became, at that time, an important political and cultural centre of northern India.

Prabhakaravardhana's wife was Yashomati. Banabhatta records their three principal children — Rajyavardhana, Harshavardhana, and Rajyashri. This very family would go on to prove exceedingly important in Indian history.

Thanesar — The Ancestral Capital

It is often stated in popular history that Thanesar was Harshavardhana's capital, but this statement cannot be regarded as entirely accurate.

Historical sources make clear that Thanesar was originally the capital of Prabhakaravardhana; that Harshavardhana took up rule from here in 606 CE; and that, after later gaining control of Kannauj, he shifted his principal capital to Kannauj.

It would therefore be more accurate to say that Thanesar was the original and ancestral capital of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, while Kannauj later became the principal capital of Harshavardhana's extensive empire. Understanding this historical distinction is necessary, for it makes clear the true significance of Prabhakaravardhana's contribution.

Prabhakaravardhana's Place in History

Because of the fame of Emperor Harshavardhana, the name of his father, Prabhakaravardhana, has remained comparatively less discussed, even though it was he who, in fact, built the political foundation upon which Harshavardhana later established a vast empire.

It is for this reason that a reassessment of Prabhakaravardhana's contribution is considered necessary in

modern historical study. A study of his reign is exceedingly important for understanding the historical identity of Thanesar.

References

- Banabhatta — Harshacharita.
- Xuanzang — Si-yu-ki (travel account).
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana).
- Recognised historical works concerning the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) dynasty.

Part 2: Harshavardhana, Harsh ka Tila, and the Ancient Civilisation of Bhagwanpura

3. Harshavardhana — Emperor at the Age of Sixteen

At the time of Prabhakaravardhana's death, the Pushyabhuti dynasty was passing through exceedingly difficult circumstances. His elder son, Rajyavardhana, was occupied in battle against enemies, while the political situation was changing rapidly. Amid this, following the passing of Queen Yashomati, the crisis facing the kingdom deepened further. At such a time, at the age of barely sixteen, Harshavardhana ascended the throne in 606 CE.

From Banabhatta's 'Harshacharita' and the travel account of the Chinese traveller Xuanzang, it is known that Harshavardhana displayed extraordinary leadership ability even at a young age. He brought together numerous kingdoms

of northern India and established a powerful empire. In his early years his rule was conducted from Thanesar, but after political unification with Kannauj, he shifted his capital there.

Harshavardhana was not merely a conquering king; he was also a scholar, a man of letters, and a patron of religion. The Sanskrit plays 'Ratnavali', 'Priyadarshika', and 'Nagananda' are traditionally attributed to him, although some scholars differ on their authorship. His court held Banabhatta, Mayura, and many other scholars in honour. Under Harsha's reign, education, religion, literature, and cultural activity received particular patronage.

The historical importance of Thanesar thus lies not only in its association with Harsha, but also in the fact that it was here that the political power of the Pushyabhuti dynasty developed, giving, in time, a new direction to the history of northern India.

4. Harsh ka Tila — A Town Hidden in the Layers of History

Harsh ka Tila, situated in the town of Thanesar, is counted among the most important archaeological sites of northern India. It is an ancient mound approximately one kilometre long and approximately 750 metres wide, its height stated to be roughly 15 to 18 metres.

Editorial clarification: these precise measurements of the mound could not be independently confirmed. They should be verified against the original ASI excavation report before final publication.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has carried out excavations here in various phases. The remains recovered from these excavations have established that this site was not confined to the Harsha period alone; evidence of continuous human habitation is found here from the Kushana period, the Gupta period, and the early medieval period through to the late medieval period.

Among the antiquities recovered, structures of baked brick, ancient walls, pottery, coins, beads, terracotta figurines, and iron and copper implements are particularly notable. These make clear that Thanesar was, in ancient times, a prosperous city and an administrative centre.

The Kurukshetra Development Board of the Government of Haryana has also included Harsh ka Tila in its documentation of historical sites. At present, this area is a monument protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, and unauthorised construction of any kind is prohibited here.

5. Bhagwanpura — Living Evidence of a Pre-Mahabharata Culture

Another exceedingly important archaeological site in the Kurukshetra region is Bhagwanpura. This village is situated near the ancient bank of the river Saraswati and holds a special place in the history of Indian archaeology.

Scientific excavation was carried out here by the Archaeological Survey of India, under the direction of Dr. Jagatpati Joshi.

Editorial clarification: the precise date of the site's discovery (1974) and its discoverer (Ravindra Singh Bisht), as well as the years of excavation (1975–76), could not be independently confirmed; the excavation carried out under Jagatpati Joshi's direction, and the findings derived from it, are supported by archaeological literature. The date and the discoverer's name should be checked against the original ASI report before final publication.

The excavation revealed continuous human habitation here from approximately 1700 BCE to 1000 BCE. The most significant discovery was that remains of the Late Harappan culture and the Painted Grey Ware culture were found together here — that is, evidence was found of a cultural overlap between the two cultures. This established that there was cultural continuity between the Indus-Saraswati civilisation and the culture of the Mahabharata period.

This discovery at Bhagwanpura is regarded as exceedingly important from the standpoint of Indian history, for it gives a clear indication that the Kurukshetra region was not merely a centre of mythological tradition, but also an actual area of habitation of ancient civilisations.

Part 3: The Archaeological Museum, the Dara Shikoh Library, the Saraswati Civilisation, and the Author's Direct Observation

6. The Archaeological Museum, Thanesar — A Living Mirror of the Past

The Archaeological Museum at Thanesar is the principal centre for the conservation and display of antiquities recovered from the various archaeological excavations carried out in the Kurukshetra region. Material recovered from Harsh ka Tila, Bhagwanpura, and other historical sites nearby is preserved here. Through these antiquities, visitors can directly experience a cultural journey from the prehistoric era through to the medieval period.

The pottery, sculptures, coins, ornaments, bricks, metal implements, and architectural remains displayed in the museum establish that Kurukshetra has been an important centre not only of religious faith, but of Indian civilisation as it developed over thousands of years.

A visit to the Archaeological Museum makes clear that history lives on not merely in books, but also in the objects that our ancestors used in their own lives.

7. The Dara Shikoh Library — A Tradition of Knowledge and Dialogue

The Dara Shikoh Library, situated near the renowned Sheikh Chilli complex at Thanesar, is an important symbol of Indian cultural harmony.

Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, was a serious student of Indian philosophy, and of the Upanishads in particular. He had numerous Sanskrit texts translated into Persian and established dialogue with scholars of various religions. His purpose was to understand the common elements among different spiritual traditions.

Although the present library building was constructed in a later period, it is named in memory of that scholarly prince who made an important effort to carry the Indian tradition of knowledge to the wider world.

In a sacred land such as Kurukshetra, the name of Dara Shikoh recalls the tradition of knowledge, tolerance, and intellectual dialogue.

8. The River Saraswati and the Civilisation of Kurukshetra

The ancient history of Kurukshetra is incomplete without the river Saraswati. Vedic literature calls the Saraswati the life-giving river of knowledge, culture, and civilisation. It is mentioned in many places in the Rigveda.

Modern geological and archaeological research has indicated that a vast river system once existed in north-western India in ancient times, on whose banks many ancient towns and settlements developed. Archaeological sites such as Bhagwanpura have lent further strength to this historical possibility.

Many of the principal tirthas of Kurukshetra — Sannihit Sarovar, Prithudak (Pehowa), Brahmayoni, Jyotisar, and other tirthas — are connected with the Saraswati tradition. This is why this region holds an important place not merely from a religious standpoint, but also among the regions of origin of Indian civilisation.

9. The Author's Direct Observation (18–30 December 2025)

From 18 December to 30 December 2025, I had the good fortune of once again visiting many historical and religious sites of the Kurukshetra region, together with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami.

During this journey, standing upon Harsh ka Tila, I looked out over the land where the history of the Pushyabhuti dynasty once developed. The information boards and the observation of the site at Bhagwanpura made it clear to me that this region bears witness to civilisations that predate even the Mahabharata era. The antiquities preserved in the Archaeological Museum gave me the opportunity to understand the history of Kurukshetra directly. At the Dara Shikoh Library and the Sheikh Chilli complex, I experienced the various dimensions of the Indian tradition of knowledge.

Visiting these sites, I felt that history does not reside in texts alone; it lives on also in soil, bricks, stones, antiquities, and local memory. For a historian, such sites serve as primary evidence.

10. Conclusion

The Vardhana dynasty, Harsh ka Tila, Bhagwanpura, the Saraswati civilisation, and the archaeological sites of Thanesar together establish that Kurukshetra is not merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata, but a multidimensional centre of Indian history, culture, and civilisation.

The political tradition established by Prabhakaravardhana, the golden reign of Harshavardhana, the ancient civilisation of Bhagwanpura, the cultural stream of the Saraswati, and the archaeological heritage preserved even today — all of these together grant Kurukshetra its place among India's most important historical and spiritual lands.

References

- Banabhatta — Harshacharita.
- Xuanzang — Si-yu-ki (travel account).
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — excavation reports for Harsh ka Tila and Bhagwanpura (final verification of precise dates/measurements pending).
- Kurukshetra Development Board (Government of Haryana).
- Recognised historical works concerning the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) dynasty.
- The author's direct travel observations (18–30 December 2025).

Chapter 10

Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth (Savitri Peeth), Kurukshetra — A Pilgrimage Account

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Part 1: Introduction, Puranic Background, and Classical Character

The sacred land of Kurukshetra is not confined to the righteous war of the Mahabharata and the teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita alone. This land also bears witness to a remarkable confluence of three traditions of worship — Shakti, Shiva, and Vishnu. Situated upon this very sacred land is Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth (Savitri Peeth), remembered with great reverence in Sanatan tradition as one of the fifty-two Shaktipeeths. This tirtha is not only a principal centre of Shakta worship, but is also an integral part of the religious, historical, and cultural heritage of Kurukshetra.

For me, this journey was not merely a tirtha-darshan; it was an important stage in my own research work. Having worked for years on the history of the Sanatan Vaishnava Bairagi tradition, I have held the firm conviction that the study of any subject should not be confined to texts alone. It is only through the convergence of scripture, site, and personal experience that history becomes more authentic and alive. It was with this very purpose that, on 27 December 2025, I had the good fortune of visiting this divine Shaktipeeth together with my wife, Smt.

Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami.

As a soldier, I learned discipline, and as a historian, I have regarded the pursuit of truth as my duty. Before this journey, therefore, I undertook a thorough study of the Kurukshetra Development Board, various historical sources, the Puranas, and the available research material, so that this chapter might become not merely an emotional reminiscence, but a well-researched and reliable document. The account presented here is an integrated form of that very study, direct observation, and family pilgrimage experience.

Puranic Background

The glory of Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth rests upon that celebrated legend of the Shakti tradition described in the Shiva Purana and Tantric literature. Prajapati Daksha organised a great yajna, to which Lord Shiva was not invited. Mother Sati, without an invitation, arrived at her father's yajna, but, seeing Lord Shiva grievously insulted there, was deeply distressed. Unable to bear this insult to her husband, she offered herself into the sacrificial fire.

When this news reached Lord Shiva, he became overcome with grief and rage, and, bearing the earthly body of Mother Sati upon his shoulder, began the Tandava dance. His terrible form threatened to unbalance the whole of creation. At the entreaty of the gods, Lord Vishnu, with his Sudarshan Chakra, cut Mother Sati's body into many parts. Wherever her limbs or

ornaments fell, those places came, in time, to be called Shaktipeeths, and became principal tirthas of Sanatan Dharma.

A list of the Shaktipeeths is found in numerous Shakta texts, including the Tantra Chudamani. Their number is given, in various traditions, as 51, 52, or even 108, but within the tradition of northern India, this Devikoop Shaktipeeth of Kurukshetra is held in exceedingly high regard.

In the context of Kurukshetra, the Vamana Purana and the Brahma Purana hold particular importance. These texts mention four sacred kunds (wells) of the Kurukshetra region — Chandrakoop, Vishnukoop, Rudrakoop, and Devikoop. Among these, Devikoop is held to be the place where Mother Sati's right ankle (gulf) fell. It is this very belief that establishes this place as a Shaktipeeth.

Naming and Classical Character

As a researcher, it is necessary to clarify that this tirtha is known by many names, each with its own religious and historical basis.

In classical texts, the presiding goddess of this Shaktipeeth is named Savitri, and her Bhairava is named Sthanu. In local tradition, this same place is renowned as the Maa Bhadrakali Temple, Devikoop, Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, and Kalika Peeth.

In the sanctum of the present temple, before the goddess's main image, a symbolic marble mark of Mother Sati's ankle is installed, regarded as the visible symbol of this Puranic tradition. This makes clear that it is not merely the worship of

the goddess that is preserved here, but also the original tradition of the Shaktipeeth itself.

This diversity of the goddess's names also reveals the breadth of Sanatan Dharma. The very same supreme power has been worshipped, across different ages, regions, and traditions, under different names and forms. In one place she is Savitri, in another Kali, in another Bhadrakali, and in another Adishakti. But the underlying principle is one and the same — the supreme power that is the foundation, the protector, and the benefactor of all creation.

This is why this Shaktipeeth of Kurukshetra remains a centre of faith not for Shakta practitioners alone, but equally for Vaishnava, Shaiva, and all devotees of the Sanatan tradition.

Part 2: Connection with the Mahabharata, the Beginning of the Journey, and the Temple Darshan

4. Connection with the Mahabharata

The significance of Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth is not confined to its being a Shaktipeeth alone; it is also connected with the Mahabharata-era history of Kurukshetra and with the wider tradition of Sanatan Dharma. According to local tradition and numerous religious sources, the tonsure ceremony (mundan sanskar) of Lord Shri Krishna and Balarama was performed at this very sacred site. This is why, even today, devotees from many parts of the country bring their children here for their first tonsure ceremony, and, upon

the fulfilment of their wishes, offer the goddess horses made of metal, clay, or wood.

Before the beginning of the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna advised Arjuna to worship the Adishakti for the victory of dharma. This tradition points to the fact that Kurukshetra has been a sacred land not merely of war, but of the confluence of Shakti, devotion, and dharma alike.

It was in this very Dharmakshetra that Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the immortal teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, which showed the whole of humanity the path of selfless action, adherence to dharma, and self-knowledge. Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth and the Gita-land of Kurukshetra thus appear to complement one another. On one side is the blessing of Shakti; on the other, the teaching of dharma. On one side, courage; on the other, wisdom. This very convergence is the greatest distinction of Sanatan culture.

Even today, when devotees take darshan at this Shaktipeeth, they bow not merely before the goddess, but also before that very Sanatan tradition which has united dharma, shakti, and compassion within a single philosophy of life.

5. The Beginning of the Journey

That winter morning of 27 December 2025 remains etched in my memory with the very same freshness even today. Being the last week of December, the whole of Kurukshetra lay wrapped in a light mist. There was a sharp chill in the air, but the warmth of devotion rendered that cold insignificant.

On this sacred journey I was accompanied by my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami. The joy of a pilgrimage with one's family is not confined to darshan alone; it also becomes a means of passing on values and faith between generations.

Before setting out towards the Maa Bhadrakali Temple, we also visited the Brahma Sarovar complex. The grand statue of Lord Shri Krishna's chariot and its seven horses, installed there, drew the eye even from a distance. It seemed as though that divine scene from the Mahabharata had come alive once again in that very place.

My granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, stood beside her grandmother, Nirmala Vaishnav, gazing at the horse statues with great curiosity. In that moment, I felt that it is only when the new generation directly beholds such sacred sites that history and culture truly remain alive. History read in books is one thing, but experiencing it while standing upon that very land is an altogether different feeling.

At that time, the same thought kept rising again and again in my mind — that this land of Kurukshetra is not merely a memory of the past, but a living heritage that binds the present and the future to its cultural roots.

6. The Temple Darshan

Moving on from Brahma Sarovar, we reached the main entrance of Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth. On entering the temple complex, the sweet sound of bells, the

chanting of Vedic mantras, and the fragrance of incense and agarbatti filled the entire atmosphere with devotion.

The temple courtyard was thronged with a constant stream of devotees. Devotees arriving from far and wide were taking darshan of the goddess with faith and conviction. Many devotees, upon the fulfilment of their wishes, were offering the goddess horses made of metal, clay, or wood. This tradition is the distinctive mark of this Shaktipeeth, and continues to be observed with full reverence to this day.

Taking my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, in my arms, I took darshan of the goddess's divine form. At that time, I wore the Vaishnava tilak upon my forehead and a traditional Himachali cap upon my head. The captivating images of the goddess carved upon the temple walls, together with its ancient craftsmanship, offered a fine introduction to the historical and cultural heritage of this place.

On entering the sanctum sanctorum, this feeling of devotion grew even deeper. Bowing at the feet of the goddess, I prayed for the wellbeing of my family, the prosperity of the nation, and the success of my research work. Years of military life taught me discipline, and pilgrimages taught me humility. In that moment, I felt a remarkable convergence of these two values of life.

The colourful bells, garlands of flowers, and creeper-and-vine decorations arranged around the sanctum made the temple's divinity all the more striking. On the face of every devotee

present there, feelings of devotion, contentment, and spiritual peace were clearly visible.

In that moment, I felt at once that tirthas are not merely architecture or ancient monuments; they are spiritual centres kept alive by the faith, conviction, and cultural memory of crores of people. Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth too is just such a divine and living symbol of Sanatan consciousness.

Part 3: The Evening Darshan, Epilogue, and Conclusion

7. The Evening Darshan

As evening fell, the entire temple complex was lit up with lamps and electric lights. This Shaktipeeth, thronged with devotees throughout the day, appeared even more divine and enchanting at night. The aarti resounding through the temple courtyard, the sound of the conch shell, and the sweet chiming of bells filled the atmosphere with spiritual energy.

In the evening we once again took darshan of the temple complex and the religious sites situated around it. On this occasion, standing before the grand images of Lord Shri Ram and Shri Krishna-Arjuna, it felt as though the entire spiritual tradition of Kurukshetra had come to life in a single place. These images, illuminated by electric light, presented a remarkable confluence of devotion and beauty.

Standing quietly with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, before these divine images for a few moments, I reflected upon the purpose and significance of this journey. After a full day of darshan, study, and direct observation, the conviction grew

even stronger within me that Kurukshetra is not merely a subject of ancient legend, but a powerful centre of a Sanatan tradition that remains alive to this day.

After this, we also had the opportunity to take darshan of beautiful images and idols of Radha-Krishna and Lord Shri Ram at another temple complex. There, my wife, Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and I together bowed at the sacred feet of the Lord. It was a deeply joyful feeling, in that moment, that several generations of the family stood together, with reverence, before these sacred symbols of Sanatan culture.

For me, this journey was not merely a tour of places of interest. Every temple, every image, every bell, and every devotee stood as living proof that this spiritual tradition, sustained for thousands of years, remains alive today with the very same devotion and enthusiasm.

8. A Researcher's Direct Experience

For a historian, the study of any subject cannot remain confined to books alone. It is only through the convergence of the study of classical texts, the examination of historical sources, and the direct observation of the relevant sites that a balanced and authentic assessment of a subject becomes possible.

This journey to Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth made it clear to me that the religious tradition of Kurukshetra is not confined to the Mahabharata or the Gita alone. Here, Shakti,

Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Saraswati, and the Rishi tradition all appear to flow together within a single cultural stream. It is this very confluence that makes Kurukshetra distinctive among India's other sacred lands.

Direct observation of the devotees' faith within the temple complex, the horses offered to the goddess, the ancient tradition of the sanctum, and local religious beliefs proved exceedingly useful for this chapter. It became clear that the traditions described in the scriptures remain alive in popular life to this day, and continue to form an integral part of devotees' daily lives.

9. Epilogue

This pilgrimage of 27 December 2025 proved, for me, to be not merely a religious journey, but a confluence of study, experience, and spiritual realisation. Alongside darshan at Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth, I had the opportunity to understand, at close quarters, the Puranic, historical, and cultural traditions of this place.

This journey further strengthened my conviction that Kurukshetra is not merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata, but a great centre of Sanatan civilisation in which a remarkable confluence of shakti, devotion, knowledge, and dharma continues to exist to this day.

This journey, undertaken together with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, will remain among those

unforgettable memories of my life which have enriched this work of research with direct experience, rather than confining it to the study of books alone.

My prayer at the sacred feet of Maa Bhadrakali is that she grant all of humanity the strength to advance upon the path of dharma, good conduct, courage, and compassion, and that future generations too preserve India's great spiritual heritage with the very same reverence.

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Chapter 11

Aditya Tirtha (Abhimanyupur): The Penance-Ground of Devamata Aditi and the Immortal Sacrifice of the Brave Abhimanyu

Part 1: A Puranic, Vedic, and Historical Introduction to Aditya Tirtha

Aditya Tirtha, situated within the 48-kos circuit of Kurukshetra and known today as Abhimanyupur, is not merely a historical village, but a living centre of Indian spiritual tradition, Vedic culture, and the immortal memories of the Mahabharata. This tirtha holds within it the divine traditions of three figures alike — Lord Surya, Devamata Aditi, and the brave Abhimanyu. It is for this reason that this place is regarded as exceedingly important from a religious, cultural, and historical standpoint.

According to ancient texts, it was upon this sacred land that Devamata Aditi performed rigorous penance in worship of Lord Surya. Pleased by her penance, Lord Vishnu assumed the Vamana incarnation and restored to the gods their rightful due. It is for this reason that this region came to be named Aditya Tirtha. In time, during the Mahabharata era, this region became connected with the valour and sacrifice of the brave

Abhimanyu, on account of which it is known today as Abhimanyupur.

The thirteenth day of the Mahabharata War is an exceedingly poignant chapter of Indian history. It was in this very region that the Chakravyuha formation was constructed, and, at the mere age of sixteen, Abhimanyu, displaying unparalleled valour, laid down his life in defence of dharma. His sacrifice became, in Indian culture, the supreme symbol of courage, duty, and devotion to one's nation.

Even today, the ancient tirtha, temple, and memorial situated at Abhimanyupur bear witness to this glorious history. Devotees come here to pay homage to the brave Abhimanyu and to experience spiritual peace through darshan of Devamata Aditi's ground of penance.

The distinguishing feature of this chapter is that it does not merely narrate Puranic tales; rather, it presents an integrated study of this tirtha on the basis of the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra, the available historical records, and the author's own direct visit to the site. The purpose is not to support any single view, but to present readers with balanced, research-based information on the basis of the available evidence.

Aditya Tirtha is thus not merely a monument to the past, but a symbol of that unbroken Sanatan tradition in which penance, sacrifice, dharma, valour, and knowledge appear together.

Part 2: The Penance of Devamata Aditi and the Description of Aditya Tirtha in the Puranas

In Sanatan scripture, Devamata Aditi is regarded as the mother of the gods and a symbol, within the whole of creation, of motherhood, compassion, patience, and dharma. The Adityas were born of Aditi, wife of the sage Kashyapa, among whom the Vamana incarnation of Lord Vishnu is particularly described. When the gods were deprived of their rightful due through the power of the demon-king Bali, Devamata Aditi resolved upon rigorous penance for the welfare of her sons and the restoration of dharma.

The Puranas describe how Aditi, under the guidance of great sages, worshipped Lord Vishnu through vows, fasting, chanting, and meditation. Pleased by her unwavering devotion and penance, Lord Vishnu granted her the boon that he would take incarnation as her son to protect the gods. This very divine incarnation later manifested as the Vamana incarnation.

Within the ancient tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra, the place known today as Aditya Tirtha is accepted by many scholars as the ground of Devamata Aditi's penance. Local traditions, the tirtha's mahatmya, and religious belief have carried this conviction forward from generation to generation. Devotees believe that it was upon this very sacred land that Aditi worshipped Lord Vishnu.

The Vamana Purana describes many sacred tirthas of Kurukshetra. Aditya Tirtha is mentioned there as a place connected with the worship of Surya, meritorious bathing, and

the worship of the gods. Darshan and bathing at this tirtha are held to be a means of destroying sin and increasing merit. It is for this reason that, since ancient times, sadhus, saints, ascetics, and devotees have come here to practise their spiritual discipline.

The significance of Aditya Tirtha is also described in the Kurukshetra Mahatmya, where it is stated that a devotee who reverently bathes, gives charity, and worships the Sun-god at this tirtha obtains a special spiritual reward. In Indian culture, the sun is regarded not merely as a planet, but as a symbol of life, energy, knowledge, and dharma. The significance of Aditya Tirtha is therefore not confined to being a religious site alone, but is also connected with the Vedic tradition of sun-worship.

The Bhagavata Purana gives a detailed account of the Payovrata undertaken by Devamata Aditi. Through this vow, she pleased Lord Vishnu, and the path towards the restoration of dharma was made clear. Although the Bhagavata Purana does not give a clear geographical name for the site of this penance, the local tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra connects this penance with Aditya Tirtha. From a research standpoint, it is worth noting that this connection rests chiefly on religious tradition, and should be understood as such.

Devotees who visit Aditya Tirtha at Abhimanyupur today reverently recall this ancient tradition of Devamata Aditi's penance, the power of motherhood, Lord Vishnu's Vamana incarnation, and sun-worship. This place conveys to us the

message that truth, penance, patience, and unwavering faith in God ultimately pave the way for the triumph of dharma.

Aditya Tirtha is thus not merely a historical site, but a living centre of Vedic tradition, the divine stories of the Puranas, and India's spiritual heritage. Here, the memories of Devamata Aditi's penance and the incarnation of Lord Vamana continue, even today, to inspire the faith of devotees.

Part 3: The Present Form of Aditya Tirtha, the Historical Development of Abhimanyupur, and Its Connection with the Mahabharata

Abhimanyupur, situated within the sacred 48-kos tirtha circuit of Kurukshetra, is today not merely an ordinary village, but a confluence of faith, history, and national memory. The place known in ancient times as Aditya Tirtha came, in time, to be renowned as Abhimanyupur, on account of the immortal saga of the Mahabharata's brave warrior, Abhimanyu. This change is not merely one of name; it is a symbol of the confluence of two traditions within Indian culture — penance and valour.

According to the Mahabharata, on the thirteenth day of the war, the Kaurava army constructed an exceedingly intricate Chakravyuha formation. At that time, Arjuna and Shri Krishna were at the other end of the battlefield. In this situation, the young Abhimanyu, possessing only the knowledge of how to enter the Chakravyuha, entered it alone. He single-handedly confronted numerous great warriors and displayed unparalleled valour. In the end, in violation of the rules of war,

many warriors attacked him together, and he attained a hero's death.

Although the various versions of the Mahabharata do not clearly specify the precise geographical location of the Chakravyuha, local tradition at Kurukshetra, tirtha belief, and the folklore of Haryana connect Abhimanyupur with this memory. It is for this reason that this place has become a centre of reverence and national pride. From a research standpoint, it is necessary to note that this connection rests chiefly on tradition and local faith, which has been accepted in numerous tirtha accounts.

Devotees who visit present-day Abhimanyupur pay homage to the sacrifice of the brave Abhimanyu. The temple, memorial site, and local religious activities here keep this historical heritage alive. On special occasions, religious observances, havans, katha recitations, and tribute programmes are organised, in which devotees from far and wide take part.

The author too had the good fortune of visiting and taking darshan at this sacred site in person. On observing the site, it became clear that the popular memory here keeps the events of the Mahabharata alive to this day. In conversation with local people, they shared many traditional stories connected with Abhimanyu's valour, passed down through generations. Although historians assess such stories on the basis of the evidence available, folk traditions nonetheless hold an important place in the conservation of cultural heritage.

The significance of Abhimanyupur is exceedingly important not only from a religious standpoint, but also from that of cultural tourism and historical study. If further scientific study were undertaken of the ancient remains, local traditions, and available historical sources of this region, new insights could be gained in understanding the cultural heritage of Kurukshetra.

The Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board have, from time to time, made numerous efforts towards the conservation and development of the 48-kos tirthas. This has further strengthened the national recognition of ancient tirthas such as Abhimanyupur. The expansion of routes, information boards, religious events, and other basic amenities for pilgrims represent important steps in this direction.

Abhimanyupur conveys to us a remarkable message — Aditya Tirtha inspires us towards penance, spiritual discipline, and devotion to God, while the memory of Abhimanyu teaches us to dedicate everything to courage, duty, and devotion to one's nation. This is the greatest distinction of this tirtha — that here, spirituality and valour complement one another, giving form to the eternal ideals of Indian culture.

Part 4: The Author's Visit to the Site and the Present Form of Abhimanyupur

From a research standpoint, a proper study of any tirtha cannot be complete on the basis of ancient texts alone; its

historical and cultural significance becomes clearer through direct visits to the site, and the study of local traditions, available monuments, and folklore. It was with this very purpose that the author visited the site of Aditya Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) and undertook a direct study of its religious and cultural character.

On arriving at Abhimanyupur, the tranquil, clean, and spiritual atmosphere of the place is the first thing to draw the mind. This place appears, even today, suffused with the memories of the Mahabharata era and the inspiration of the brave Abhimanyu's unparalleled sacrifice. Local devotees and pilgrims bow before this site with reverence, regarding it as a sacred land of dharma, courage, and sacrifice.

The author observed the grand statue of the brave Abhimanyu installed here. In the statue, Abhimanyu is depicted holding the wheel of a chariot in both hands. This scene symbolises that final moment of the Mahabharata when, even after all his weapons were exhausted, he did not leave the battlefield, and fought on to his last breath in defence of dharma. This statue is an immortal source of inspiration for Indian youth towards courage, duty, and devotion to nation.

The path leading to the statue has been constructed in the form of the Chakravyuha. As devotees walk along this winding path to reach the statue, they symbolically experience the memory of Abhimanyu's entry into the Chakravyuha. This architectural design is not merely a monument, but a fine attempt to present history as a felt experience.

The author also spoke with devotees and local people present at the site. They explained that this place is not merely a memorial, but a centre of reverence and inspiration. Every year, large numbers of people come here to pay tribute to the brave Abhimanyu and to remember his indomitable courage.

In the author's view, the conservation of Abhimanyupur is not merely a religious duty, but also an important task in the conservation of India's cultural and historical heritage. This site conveys to the new generation the message that it is not age, but courage, duty, and devotion to dharma, that render a person immortal.

This visit to the site was, for the author, not merely a tirtha-darshan, but a direct experience of Indian history, the heroic tradition of the Mahabharata, and the living form of Sanatan culture. Abhimanyupur remains, to this day, witness to that immortal saga which made valour and sacrifice the eternal ideal of Indian culture.

Part 5: Conclusion, Conservation, and a Research Assessment

Aditya Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) is such a sacred place within the 48-kos tirtha circuit of Kurukshetra where Vedic tradition, Puranic faith, the heroic saga of the Mahabharata, and modern cultural consciousness all appear together. On one side, this place is connected with the memories of Devamata Aditi's penance and Lord Vamana's incarnation; on the other, it is also

an immortal symbol of the brave Abhimanyu's unparalleled valour and sacrifice.

The message of the Mahabharata is not merely a description of war, but a message of dharma, duty, and sacrifice. Abhimanyu's life is the finest example of the truth that, in defence of dharma, it is not age but courage, self-belief, and devotion to duty that are necessary. This is why every citizen of India, even today, remembers the name of Abhimanyu with pride and reverence.

The present form of Abhimanyupur is proof that society has made a successful effort to keep its historical memories alive. The grand statue installed here, the symbolic structure of the Chakravyuha, and the religious atmosphere serve as an important means of connecting future generations with Indian history and culture.

From a research standpoint, it is necessary that an integrated study continue to be carried out of the available Puranas, the Mahabharata, local folklore, archaeological studies, and government records relating to this region. This will help in understanding the ancient cultural heritage of Kurukshetra more authentically. At the same time, it is also necessary that, where historical facts are available, they be presented as facts, and where traditional beliefs exist, they be clearly identified as such. This is the responsibility of an impartial researcher.

The author holds that Abhimanyupur is not merely a heritage of Haryana or Kurukshetra, but an integral part of the cultural and national heritage of the whole of India. The conservation,

cleanliness, tree-planting, updating of information boards, and encouragement of research at this site are the need of the hour, so that future generations too may become acquainted with this invaluable heritage.

For the author, this journey was not merely a research expedition, but an emotional experience as well. When he bowed reverently before the statue of the brave Abhimanyu, he felt that the true glory of Indian culture is preserved not merely in our texts, but also in those sacred sites where history, even today, silently tells its own story.

Aditya Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) offers us this inspiration — that dharma is established through penance, and protected through valour. This is the eternal message of this tirtha, and this too is its immortal identity.

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- The Vamana Purana
- The Kurukshetra Mahatmya
- Material concerning the 48-Kos Tirthas published by the Kurukshetra Development Board
- The author's visit to the site and direct observation (2026)

— End of Chapter 11 —

Chapter 12

The River Saraswati: The Lifeline of the Vedic Age

Part 1: The Immortal Stream of Vedic Civilisation and the Cultural Foundation of Kurukshetra

If, in the history of Indian civilisation, there is one river that may be called not merely a stream of water, but the mother of knowledge, culture, spirituality, and civilisation, it is undoubtedly the river Saraswati. In Vedic literature, the Saraswati is honoured not merely as a geographical river, but as the presiding power of knowledge, speech, prosperity, and life itself. This is why the Saraswati holds a place in Indian tradition every bit as sacred as the Ganga and the Yamuna.

The Rigveda describes the Saraswati in numerous hymns. She is called "Nadītamā, Ambitamā, Devitamā" — that is, the foremost among rivers, the foremost among mothers, and the foremost among goddesses. These epithets make clear that, in the Vedic era, the Saraswati was not merely a source of water, but the very foundation of the entire social, religious, and cultural life of the time. Rigvedic society developed on the banks of this very river, where agriculture, animal husbandry, education, yajna, and the Vedic way of life found their systematic expansion.

According to ancient Indian tradition, the region lying between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati is called 'Brahmavarta'. The Manusmriti regards Brahmavarta as the finest land for

dharma, sacrament, and Vedic conduct. Scholars hold that present-day Haryana, and the extensive Kurukshetra region in particular, formed an important part of this ancient Brahmavarta. This was the very land where the Vedic sages established their hermitages and bestowed upon human civilisation the invaluable knowledge of the Vedas.

The significance of Kurukshetra is likewise inseparably connected with the river Saraswati. Most of the ancient tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are mentioned together with the river Saraswati or its tributary streams. Numerous religious texts describe how countless sages performed penance, conducted yajnas, and composed scriptures in this region. It is for this reason that Kurukshetra is called not merely a battlefield, but also a land of Vedic knowledge.

The publication 'The 48 Kos Kurukshetra — A Cultural Journey', published by the Haryana Tourism Department, likewise regards the river Saraswati as the fundamental basis of Kurukshetra's cultural identity. This publication notes that it was on the banks of the Saraswati that Vedic culture attained its highest form, and that numerous tirthas developed there.

The significance of the river Saraswati is not confined to religious tradition alone. Modern archaeology, geology, and the study of satellite imagery have also presented new possibilities on this subject. Studies conducted by Indian scientific institutions and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), among other research bodies, indicate that a vast ancient river system existed in north-western India,

one that many scholars connect with the Vedic Saraswati. Although research continues into its course and history, this subject remains an exceedingly important field of study in Indian history and archaeology.

The river Saraswati is thus not merely a memory of the past, but a foundation of the development of Indian civilisation, one that gave direction to knowledge, dharma, culture, and social life. The glory of the sacred land of Kurukshetra is likewise connected with the historical and spiritual tradition of this very river. The study of the river Saraswati is therefore not merely the study of a river, but an attempt to understand the Vedic soul of India.

Part 2: The River Saraswati in the Rigveda, the Title 'Nadītamā', and the Concept of Brahmavarta

The most ancient and authentic mention of the river Saraswati is found in the Rigveda. There, the Saraswati is described not merely as a river, but as a source of life, knowledge, prosperity, and divine consciousness. The Vedic sages regarded the Saraswati as a great river that nourished human life, agriculture, education, yajna, and spiritual practice. It is for this reason that the Rigveda addresses her as "Ambitame, Nadītame, Devitame Sarasvati" — meaning, O Saraswati, you are the foremost among mothers, the foremost among rivers, and the foremost among goddesses.

This title makes clear that, in Vedic society, the Saraswati's place was not that of a mere natural watercourse; she was the

very lifeline of civilisation itself. Agriculture flourished on both banks of the river, animal husbandry developed, and the hermitages of sages became principal centres of knowledge and penance. It was from here that the Vedic mantras were recited, and the foundation of Indian culture was strengthened.

The River Hymn of the Rigveda (Mandala 10, Sukta 75) mentions the Saraswati alongside numerous other rivers, according her a place of prominence. Other hymns describe her swift current, her vast form, and her flow towards the sea. On the basis of these descriptions, many historians and geographers hold that the Saraswati must have been a vast and water-rich river in the Vedic era.

The Manusmriti calls the region lying between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati 'Brahmavarta'. According to the Manusmriti, this was the very sacred land where the finest conduct, Vedic dharma, and social propriety developed. In Indian tradition, Brahmavarta is regarded as the region of origin of dharma and culture. Most scholars hold present-day Haryana, and the Kurukshetra region in particular, to be an important part of this ancient Brahmavarta.

Brahmavarta was not merely a geographical region; it was the laboratory of Vedic culture. It was here that sages performed yajnas, studied and taught the Vedas, and established the principles of dharma, ethics, and sacrament for human life. It is for this reason that Kurukshetra, in time, also received the title of 'Dharmakshetra'.

The hermitages of numerous renowned sages — such as Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, Kanva, Bharadwaj, and other Vedic sages — are mentioned, on the banks of the river Saraswati, in various texts and traditions. Although the precise geographical location of each hermitage is not available today, it remains beyond dispute that the bank of the Saraswati was a principal centre of Vedic education and spiritual practice.

Within the 48-kos tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra, many tirthas remain today that are connected with the river Saraswati. The religious standing of these tirthas is proof that the Saraswati is not merely a memory of the past, but remains alive today in the faith of the Indian people.

An integrated study of the Rigveda, the Manusmriti, and other ancient texts thus indicates that the river Saraswati played an exceedingly important role in the early development of Indian civilisation. Her contribution to the development of knowledge, dharma, culture, and social life was so extensive that it seems entirely fitting to call her the true lifeline of the Vedic age.

Part 3: The Hermitages of Vedic Sages on the Banks of the River Saraswati, the Composition of the Vedas, and the Yajna Tradition

The river Saraswati was not merely a vast stream of water; she was also a great centre of Vedic knowledge, spiritual practice, and Indian culture. According to ancient Indian tradition, numerous sages established their hermitages on the sacred

banks of the Saraswati, where the study and teaching of the Vedas, yajna, penance, and spiritual inquiry continued without interruption. It is for this reason that the Saraswati is also called the "Gyan-Ganga" — the Ganges of Knowledge — of Indian civilisation.

In the Vedic era, hermitages were not merely places of residence. They were the universities, research institutions, and spiritual centres of their time. Students came here from far and wide to receive education. Gurus trained their disciples in the Vedas, the Vedangas, philosophy, grammar, astrology, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, and ethical living. In this way, the hermitages that developed on the bank of the Saraswati gave the Indian tradition of knowledge a lasting foundation.

Many hymns of the Rigveda are held to have been composed in the Saraswati region. The mantras that the Vedic sages perceived while worshipping nature, fire, the sun, the wind, Indra, Varuna, and Saraswati went on to become an invaluable heritage of human civilisation. In Vedic tradition, the Vedas are regarded not as texts composed by human beings, but as divine knowledge perceived by the sages.

The yajna tradition developed in a particularly rich form on the bank of the Saraswati. Yajna was not merely a religious rite; it was also a means of social unity, environmental conservation, agricultural prosperity, and public welfare. Through yajnas, a sense of discipline, cooperation, and collective responsibility developed within society. This is why the Saraswati region

holds particular importance in Vedic literature as a sacrificial ground as well.

The significance of Kurukshetra is likewise connected with this great yajna tradition. Numerous Puranas and the Kurukshetra Mahatmya mention that sages performed countless yajnas in this region. In time, King Kuru too established this very land as a land of dharma, penance, and karma. It is for this reason that Kurukshetra received the title 'Dharmakshetra'.

Many tirthas situated on the bank of the river Saraswati remain, even today, living symbols of this Vedic tradition. Jyotisar, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Prithudak (Pehowa), Kapalmochan, Adibadri, and many other tirthas of the 48-kos region are held to be connected, directly or indirectly, with the cultural stream of the Saraswati. The tradition of yajna, havan, shraddha, charity, and religious observance continues without interruption at these tirthas today, presenting evidence of a cultural continuity spanning thousands of years.

Modern historians and archaeologists likewise hold that the early civilisations that developed in north-western India must have had a deep connection with some vast river system. The discovery of numerous archaeological sites indicates that ancient human settlement, agriculture, and trade developed considerably in this region. Although research continues into the direct connection between these sites and the Vedic Saraswati, this subject has given a new direction to the study of Indian history.

The author holds that the significance of the river Saraswati lies not merely in her being an ancient river, but also in the fact that she gave India a heritage of knowledge, culture, education, yajna, and spiritual consciousness that guided Indian society for thousands of years. Even today, when we recall the Saraswati, we recall not merely a vanished river, but that great Vedic culture which brought the light of knowledge to the whole of humanity.

The hermitages that developed on the bank of the river Saraswati, the composition of the Vedas, and the yajna tradition are thus golden chapters of Indian civilisation. It is because of these that the river Saraswati is called the true lifeline of the Vedic age.

Part 4: The Connection between Kurukshetra, King Kuru, and the River Saraswati, and Modern Scientific Research

The connection between the river Saraswati and Kurukshetra is one of the most important chapters of Indian history, religion, and culture. According to ancient texts, the sanctity of Kurukshetra rests not on the Mahabharata War alone; its foundation lies in that Vedic culture which developed on the bank of the river Saraswati. It is for this reason that Kurukshetra received such glorious names as Dharmakshetra, Brahmakshetra, and Yajnabhoomi.

According to the accounts of the Puranas and the Mahabharata, King Kuru made a symbolic resolve, in this very region, to sow the seeds of penance, truth, compassion,

forgiveness, charity, and dharma. It is said that he ploughed this land with a golden plough, establishing it as a land of dharma. According to religious tradition, Lord Indra, pleased with King Kuru, granted the boon that those who lived righteously upon this land, and who performed penance, yajna, and meritorious deeds here, would obtain a special spiritual reward. This very tradition, in time, became the foundation of Kurukshetra's sacred identity.

The importance of the river Saraswati grows still further in the Mahabharata era. Although the detailed account of the war is centred upon the land of Kurukshetra, numerous tirthas, hermitages, and religious sites are described as connected with the river Saraswati or her ancient tributaries. Indian tradition mentions the sacred tirthas of this region as described by Shri Krishna, the Pandavas, and numerous sages before the war. This makes clear that the Saraswati was not merely a river, but the cultural axis of the entire Kurukshetra region.

Numerous tirthas falling within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra — such as Jyotisar, Sannihit Sarovar, Brahma Sarovar, Pehowa (Prithudak), Adibadri, and other Saraswati-connected sites — continue, even today, to keep alive the memory of this ancient tradition. Devotees believe that the divine stream of the Saraswati has been the foundation of the spiritual significance of these tirthas.

In the modern era, the river Saraswati has become an important subject of research not merely in religious

discourse, but in archaeology, geology, hydrology, and satellite science as well. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), geological institutions, and various universities have, on the basis of satellite imagery, groundwater surveys, and sediment studies, uncovered evidence of an ancient river system in north-western India. Many scientists hold that this ancient watercourse may be connected with the river Saraswati described in Vedic literature.

It is also worth noting, however, that scholars still differ over the precise course, origin, and causes of the disappearance of the river Saraswati. Some research holds her to be a vast river descending from the Himalayas, while other scholars view her as a river system formed of numerous rivers and seasonal watercourses. As an impartial researcher, it is therefore necessary to respect these various views.

The Government of Haryana has undertaken various schemes for the development of the Adibadri Saraswati source region, the conservation of Saraswati heritage, and the enhancement of the tirthas connected with the river. Likewise, the Kurukshetra Development Board has also accorded particular importance to Saraswati-connected sites within the 48-kos tirtha circuit. The purpose of these efforts is not merely to promote religious tourism, but also to conserve India's ancient cultural heritage.

In the author's view, the study of the river Saraswati is not merely an inquiry into the past, but an attempt to understand

the roots of Indian civilisation. When an integrated study is made of religious texts, archaeological discoveries, scientific research, and local traditions, the river Saraswati emerges before us as an exceedingly important chapter of Indian history.

The connection between Kurukshetra and the Saraswati is thus not merely geographical, but cultural, spiritual, and historical. This connection remains, even today, a subject of reverence, research, and national pride in the Indian collective consciousness.

Part 5: The Author's Experience, Conclusion, and the Immortal Cultural Stream of the Saraswati

The river Saraswati is not confined to the pages of history and the Puranas alone; her memory remains alive today in the tirthas situated upon the sacred land of Kurukshetra. Although the river's visible form has vanished over time, her spiritual and cultural stream continues to flow without interruption to this day. Jyotisar, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Pehowa (Prithudak), Narkatari (the Banganga region), Adibadri, and many other tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are symbols of this very immortal legacy of the Saraswati.

The author has had the good fortune, in his own life, of visiting these sacred sites on numerous occasions. Each journey brought a new experience, new inspiration, and new historical knowledge. At times, the tranquil waters of Brahma Sarovar bestowed spiritual peace; at times, Jyotisar brought to mind

the divine message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita; at times, the ancient tirtha of Pehowa gave a sense of Vedic tradition; and at times, Narkatari and other tirthas brought the events of the Mahabharata vividly to life.

During this research journey, the author did not merely take religious darshan; he also spoke with local people, directly observed temples, lakes, and ancient sites, and studied the available historical and government sources. This direct study further strengthened the conviction that, to understand the soul of Kurukshetra, it is essential to understand the cultural stream of the Saraswati.

The river Saraswati is that lifeline of Indian civilisation which gave direction to Vedic knowledge, the tradition of the sages, the culture of yajna, education, agriculture, and social life. This is why, even after thousands of years have passed, her name continues to be spoken with reverence and honour among the Indian people. Modern scientific research, archaeological study, and satellite imagery have likewise presented new possibilities on this subject, so that research on the Saraswati continues to advance.

The author holds that the conservation of the river Saraswati is not merely a matter of the discovery of a river, but also a question of the conservation of India's cultural memory and Vedic heritage. If future generations are to remain connected with their roots, the conservation and scientific study of the tirthas, archaeological sites, and historical traditions connected with the Saraswati must continue without pause.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to declare any single view as the final truth, but to present before readers the multidimensional character of the river Saraswati, on the basis of Vedic literature, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, modern scientific research, government publications, and the author's own direct visits to the sites. This too is the responsibility of a researcher.

It may finally be said that, although the river Saraswati may not be directly visible today, her stream of knowledge continues to flow, even now, through Indian culture, literature, religion, and national consciousness, just as it flowed in the Vedic age. This is the immortality of the Saraswati, and this too is her greatest identity.

Principal References

- The Rigveda (particularly the River Hymn)
- The Manusmriti
- The Mahabharata
- The Vamana Purana
- The Kurukshetra Mahatmya
- Haryana Tourism Department — The 48 Kos Kurukshetra: A Cultural Journey
- Research available on the river Saraswati from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)

Chapter 13

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra: Boundary, Geography, and Cultural Character

Part 1: The Concept of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, Its Boundary, and Historical Development

Within India's cultural heritage, the 48-Kos Kurukshetra holds a place all its own. It is not merely a geographical region, but a living heritage, thousands of years old, of Vedic culture, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the tradition of the sages, and Sanatan Dharma. It was upon this very sacred land that the Vedic sages performed their yajnas, numerous hermitages were established, the great war of the Mahabharata was fought, and Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the immortal teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

In ancient Indian systems of measurement, the 'kos' was a traditional unit of distance. A kos is generally held to measure between roughly three and three-and-a-half kilometres. The 48-kos region thus represents a vast cultural circuit of more than approximately 150 kilometres. This region is not confined to the present Kurukshetra district alone, but encompasses sacred tirthas spread across numerous districts of Haryana, including Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Karnal, Panipat, and Jind.

The Puranas and the Mahabharata refer to this region by such names as Dharmakshetra, Brahmakshetra, Samantapanchaka,

and Kurukshetra. The Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, the Naradiya Purana, and the Kurukshetra Mahatmya give a detailed account of the glory of this region. Religious belief holds that bathing, charity, chanting, penance, and yajna performed upon this land are especially meritorious.

In modern times, the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB) has carried out important work in the conservation, development, and documentation of this ancient heritage. Initial surveys had documented 134 tirthas within the 48-kos region, but following extensive research and fresh surveys, 182 tirthas have now been officially recorded. The Board's work of identifying new tirthas and undertaking their historical study continues without interruption to this day.

These 182 tirthas have been classified into various categories — Deva Tirtha, Rishi Tirtha, Nitya Tirtha, Mahabharata-associated Tirtha, Shakti Tirtha, and Naimittika Tirtha. This makes clear that the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a religious circumambulation, but a vast repository of Indian history, archaeology, geography, culture, and faith.

For the author, this chapter is not merely the result of study from books. During the preparation of this work of research, the author visited many of the principal tirthas of the 48-kos region directly and repeatedly, studied local traditions, observed archaeological sites, and undertook a thorough study of government sources, including the new 48-Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Guide published by the Kurukshetra Development Board. This direct experience made it clear that the cultural

boundary of Kurukshetra is far more extensive and ancient than its administrative boundaries.

This chapter presents a research-based study of the geographical boundary, administrative extent, classification of tirthas, cultural character, and present conservation efforts of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, so that readers may understand the true breadth and significance of this great pilgrimage region.

Part 2: The Detailed Character of the 182 Tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a town or a district, but a vast cultural, religious, and historical region. Over time, on the basis of fresh surveys conducted by the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, local traditions, and archaeological studies, 182 tirthas have now been identified within this region. The conservation, development, and promotion of these tirthas continues without pause.

These 182 tirthas extend across the present districts of Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Jind, and Panipat. Each tirtha has its own distinct history, religious significance, and cultural message. In one place, the memory of an event from the Mahabharata is preserved; in another, the ground of a Vedic sage's penance; in another, a site for the worship of the gods; and in yet another, the tradition of ancestral offerings, yajna, and Sanatan sacraments remains alive to this day.

The Kurukshetra Development Board has classified these tirthas into various categories, such as:

- Deva Tirtha (tirthas of the gods)
- Rishi Tirtha (tirthas of the sages)
- Nitya Tirtha (perpetual tirthas)
- Mahabharata-associated tirthas
- Naimittika Tirtha (occasional tirthas)

This classification proves exceedingly helpful in understanding the religious character and historical background of the tirthas.

The greatest number of tirthas are situated in Kurukshetra district, where Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, Karna ka Tila, the Chakravyuha site, and many other ancient sites are found.

In Karnal district are found Sitamai, Vedavati, Parashar, Jamadagni, Prithvi Tirtha, Brahma Tirtha, Surya Tirtha, and many other ancient religious sites, mentioned in local traditions and ancient texts.

In Kaithal district, Pehowa (Prithudak), Kapil Muni, the bank of the Saraswati, and numerous ancient sacrificial sites hold particular significance. Pehowa remains renowned throughout India today as a principal tirtha for ancestral shraddha and tarpan.

Jind and Panipat districts too hold numerous hermitages of sages, sites of divine worship, and ancient tirthas as an integral

part of this cultural circuit, establishing that the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not confined to any single town, but is the living form of a vast spiritual civilisation.

During the author's research journeys through these tirthas, it became clear that each place holds within it a fresh chapter of history. Many places remain, even today, situated amid tranquil villages, while some tirthas have taken on a grand form through modern development. Yet, in every place, the continuity of the Sanatan tradition is clearly evident.

It is for this reason that the 48-Kos Kurukshetra may be called not merely a collection of tirthas, but a living map of India's Vedic, Puranic, Mahabharata-era, and cultural consciousness.

Part 3: The Administrative Extent and Cultural Unity of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

The greatest distinction of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is that its identity is not confined to any single town or district. It is a cultural region whose boundaries are far more extensive than its present administrative boundaries. Today this region extends chiefly across the districts of Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Jind, and Panipat, while its cultural influence is visible in other parts of Haryana, and even in Punjab, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh.

In ancient times, the boundary of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra was determined not on the basis of modern maps, but on the basis of rivers, forests, hermitages, sacrificial sites, and tirthas. This is why many places described in the Puranas and the

Mahabharata, though situated today in different districts, remain connected within a single religious tradition.

The fresh survey conducted by the Kurukshetra Development Board presents a systematic account of the 182 tirthas of the 48-kos region. This is not merely a list of tirthas, but evidence of the continuity of Sanatan culture. Each tirtha bears witness to some religious, historical, or cultural event.

Travelling through this entire region, one clearly senses a remarkable uniformity within its culture. Villages change, administrative districts change, but the tradition of the tirthas, popular faith, religious observances, fairs, sacred lakes, ancient temples, and the memories of saints and mahatmas appear bound together within a single cultural thread.

During the author's research journey, it was found that many tirthas remain preserved, even today, within a rural setting. In some places, only an ancient lake survives; in others, an archaeological mound; in others, a temple; and in others, local folklore keeps the identity of the place alive. On the other hand, principal tirthas such as Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sannihit Sarovar, Pehowa, and Sthaneshwar have already been developed with modern facilities, drawing lakhs of devotees every year.

This very distinction sets the 48-Kos Kurukshetra apart from India's other pilgrimage regions. Here, dharma, history, archaeology, geography, folk life, and cultural traditions complement one another. This is why this region is not merely

a centre of reverence, but also a vast open laboratory for the study of Indian civilisation.

In modern times, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Archaeological Survey of India, the Government of Haryana, and various religious institutions continue to carry out the work of conserving and developing these tirthas. This is paving the way to keep this invaluable cultural heritage safe for future generations.

Conclusion

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a geographical circuit, but a living centre of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, the Mahabharata tradition, and Sanatan faith. The 182 tirthas situated here bear witness to the cultural continuity of this region. Even today, this land holds equal importance from three standpoints alike — reverence, research, and tourism. The conservation and authentic documentation of these tirthas for future generations is our collective responsibility.

Chapter 14

The Lakes, Kunds, and Sacred Water Tradition of Kurukshetra

Part 1: Water, Tirtha, and the Foundation of Sanatan Culture

In Indian culture, water is regarded not merely as a natural resource, but as a symbol of life, purity, and spiritual consciousness. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, and the Mahabharata describe water as the fundamental element of creation. It is for this reason that the ancient civilisations of India developed around rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. The sacred land of Kurukshetra is likewise a great example of this tradition, where countless lakes, kunds, tirthas, and ancient reservoirs continue, even today, to preserve the cultural memories of thousands of years.

Many of the tirthas situated within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are connected with some lake, kund, river, or watercourse. Among these, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Banganga, Bhishma Kund, Pehowa (Prithudak), Narkatari, Kapil Muni Tirtha, Adibadri, and many other water-tirthas are particularly notable. The significance of these water sites is exceedingly important not only from a religious standpoint, but also from historical, cultural, and environmental standpoints.

In Vedic tradition, water is regarded as a source of purity, energy, and life. The Rigveda describes water as bestowing

medicine, strength, and wellbeing. This is why water holds particular importance in yajna, worship, shraddha, charity, bathing, and other religious sacraments. The lakes and kunds of Kurukshetra are living symbols of this very ancient tradition.

Brahma Sarovar is regarded in Indian tradition as a symbol of the beginning of creation. Religious belief holds that it was in this very region that Lord Brahma began the work of creation. Similarly, Sannihit Sarovar is held to be the confluence of seven sacred rivers, while Pehowa (Prithudak) is renowned for ancestral offerings and shraddha. Jyotisar is connected with the memory of the teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita by Lord Shri Krishna, and Bhishma Kund and Banganga are immortal symbols of events from the Mahabharata.

The significance of these water sites is not confined to religious faith alone. In ancient times, lakes and kunds were also centres of water conservation, agriculture, animal husbandry, and social life. Temples, hermitages, dharamshalas, and sacrificial sites developed around many lakes, making them centres of cultural activity as well.

In modern times, the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board, and other institutions are carrying out the work of conserving and developing these lakes and kunds. Through the construction of ghats, cleanliness measures, lighting arrangements, tree-planting, and religious events, an effort is being made to connect these ancient water-tirthas with the new generation.

The author too has had the opportunity to visit these lakes and kunds on numerous occasions. Each site has its own distinct historical memory, religious tradition, and cultural identity. At times, the vastness of Brahma Sarovar fills the mind with wonder; at times, the spiritual peace of Sannihit Sarovar; and at times, the Mahabharata-era memories of Bhishma Kund and Banganga awaken reverence within the mind.

This chapter presents a historical, Puranic, cultural, and research-based study of the principal lakes, kunds, and water-tirthas of Kurukshetra, so that readers may understand, in its entirety, the significance of this great water tradition.

Part 2: Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, and the Immortal Water Tradition of the Saraswati

Among the sacred water-tirthas of Kurukshetra, Brahma Sarovar and Sannihit Sarovar are held in the highest regard. Both these lakes are not merely centres of religious faith, but also living symbols of Indian culture, Vedic tradition, and the heritage of the Mahabharata era. Every year, lakhs of devotees arrive here from within India and abroad for bathing, worship, charity, shraddha, and spiritual practice.

Brahma Sarovar: A Symbol of Creation

According to Sanatan tradition, Brahma Sarovar is the sacred place where the Creator, Lord Brahma, began the work of creation. It is for this reason that it came to be named 'Brahma Sarovar'. The Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, and the Kurukshetra Mahatmya describe the glory of this lake.

Religious belief holds that bathing here on the occasion of a solar eclipse, amavasya, Gita Jayanti, and other auspicious festivals bestows special spiritual merit.

At present, Brahma Sarovar is regarded as one of India's largest man-made sacred lakes. The ghats built around it, the circumambulatory path, temples, sacrificial halls, and the sight of evening lamp offerings are a source of great attraction for devotees. On special occasions, Brahma Sarovar, illuminated by thousands of lamps, presents a remarkable glimpse of Indian culture.

Sannihit Sarovar: The Confluence of Seven Sacred Rivers

Situated a short distance from Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar likewise holds exceedingly distinctive religious significance. According to Sanatan belief, a divine confluence of seven sacred rivers — the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Godavari, the Narmada, the Sindhu, and the Kaveri — takes place here on every amavasya and on special festivals. It is for this reason that it came to be named 'Sannihit', meaning the lake where all things gather together.

Puranic texts describe the special significance of bathing, tarpan, and ancestral shraddha at this lake. Devotees believe that religious observances performed here with devotion become a means of bringing peace to their ancestors and spiritual welfare to themselves. It is for this reason that religious activity continues here without interruption throughout the year.

The Immortal Water Tradition of the Saraswati

Both Brahma Sarovar and Sannihit Sarovar are also connected with the cultural tradition of the ancient river Saraswati. Although the direct flow of the Saraswati is not visible today, her memory remains alive in the religious traditions of Kurukshetra even now. Many scholars hold that the sanctity of these lakes rests on that very ancient Vedic tradition which established the Saraswati as the presiding river of knowledge, penance, and culture.

The Author's Experience

The author has had the good fortune, in his own life, of visiting Brahma Sarovar and Sannihit Sarovar on numerous occasions. Each visit made it clear that the atmosphere of these lakes is not merely religious, but exceedingly spiritual and cultural as well. The morning aarti, the faith of devotees, the fragrance of yajna, the temple bells, and the tranquil expanse of water fill the mind with a remarkable sense of peace.

The author holds that Brahma Sarovar and Sannihit Sarovar are not merely reservoirs of water, but living witnesses to memories thousands of years old within Indian civilisation. Their conservation is not merely a religious duty, but an important task in the conservation of national cultural heritage.

Part 3: Pehowa (Prithudak), Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Narkatari, and Other Principal Water-Tirthas

The 48-kos tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra is not confined to Brahma Sarovar and Sannihit Sarovar alone. This sacred region holds numerous lakes, kunds, and water-tirthas connected with the Mahabharata, Vedic tradition, ancestral shraddha, the penance of sages, and Sanatan culture. Each tirtha holds its own distinct historical and religious identity, bearing witness to some important chapter of Indian culture.

Pehowa (Prithudak): The Great Tirtha of Ancestral Shraddha

Among the principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, Pehowa, whose ancient name is Prithudak, is regarded as exceedingly important. The Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, and the Kurukshetra Mahatmya describe the glory of Prithudak. Religious belief holds that performing shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan for one's ancestors here brings them peace. This is why devotees from various states of the country come here throughout the year to perform the shraddha of their forebears. Connected with the ancient tradition of the river Saraswati, this tirtha remains, even today, a principal centre of Sanatan sacraments.

Bhishma Kund: A Symbol of Sacrifice and Penance

The very mention of the great Mahabharata warrior Bhishma Pitamah naturally awakens the memory of Kurukshetra's Bhishma Kund. According to tradition, when Bhishma Pitamah lay upon his bed of arrows and grew thirsty, Arjuna pierced the

earth with a divine arrow to bring forth a stream of water. That very place is reverently remembered today as Bhishma Kund. This tirtha offers an immortal inspiration towards sacrifice, integrity, and adherence to dharma.

Banganga and Narkatari

Banganga and Narkatari, situated near Kurukshetra, are also important tirthas connected with Mahabharata-era traditions. Banganga is connected with the popular tradition of the stream of water brought forth by Arjuna, while Narkatari is honoured as the region connected with Bhishma Pitamah's bed of arrows. Even today, devotees arrive at these sites to recall the events of the Mahabharata and draw inspiration from the ideals of dharma and duty.

Other Principal Water-Tirthas

Besides these, the 48-Kos Kurukshetra holds numerous other water-tirthas, including various kunds, lakes, stepwells, and ancient reservoirs. These are connected with the grounds of sages' penance, sacrificial land, sites of divine worship, and various Puranic episodes. In many places, religious fairs, bathing, yajnas, and cultural events continue to be held to this day, sustaining the living tradition of this region.

The Author's Direct Experience

During this research journey, the author had the opportunity to take darshan at Pehowa, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Narkatari, and other water-tirthas on numerous occasions. At each site, it became clear that not merely history, but reverence and popular memory, remain equally alive here. The

traditions recounted by local people, the antiquity of the temples, the tranquillity of the lakes, and the faith of pilgrims grant these places their distinctive identity.

The author holds that the significance of these water-tirthas is exceedingly important not merely from a religious standpoint, but also from that of history, archaeology, culture, environment, and the study of folk life. Their conservation and scientific documentation is a national responsibility towards future generations.

The lakes and kunds of Kurukshetra are thus not merely reservoirs of water; they are immortal symbols of the continuously flowing cultural stream of Indian civilisation. Standing today upon the banks of these sacred water-tirthas, one feels as though the voice of the Vedic sages, the conch-call of the Mahabharata, and the divine consciousness of Sanatan culture still pulse within this land.

Part 4: Conclusion, Conservation, and the Author's Research Journey

The lakes, kunds, and sacred water-tirthas of Kurukshetra are not merely centres of religious faith; they are also invaluable evidence of India's Vedic civilisation, Mahabharata-era history, the tradition of the Puranas, and Sanatan culture. For thousands of years, these reservoirs have provided society not merely with water, but with the very foundation of culture, sacrament, spirituality, and folk life.

Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Pehowa (Prithudak), Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Narkatari, Jyotisar, and the other water-tirthas situated within the 48-kos region remain, even today, principal centres of reverence, faith, and cultural consciousness. Each tirtha holds its own distinct historical identity, but the fundamental purpose of all of them is to convey to humanity the message of dharma, truth, service, sacrifice, and respect for nature.

During the writing of this work of research, the author had the opportunity to visit these principal water-tirthas on numerous occasions. At many sites, the tranquil atmosphere of the lakes at sunrise, the temple aartis, the chanting of Vedic mantras, and the faith of devotees made it clear that Kurukshetra is not merely a subject of history, but remains, even today, a centre of living spiritual consciousness. Each journey brought new information, new historical facts, and many important details connected with local traditions, which helped make this research more authentic.

In modern times, owing to population growth, urbanisation, water pollution, and the increasing pressure on natural resources, the need for the conservation of these ancient water heritages has grown greater than ever before. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Archaeological Survey of India, and local religious institutions continue to work towards the conservation, beautification, and development of these tirthas. The reconstruction of ghats, cleanliness campaigns, water conservation, the installation of information boards, and the

development of the tirtha-parikrama route are important efforts in this direction.

The author holds that conservation is not possible through government schemes alone. It is also the duty of every devotee and citizen to maintain the cleanliness of these lakes and kunds, to avoid polluting the water, and to hold this cultural heritage in respect. If society and administration work together, this invaluable heritage can be carried safely forward to future generations.

This chapter has been written through an integrated study of Vedic texts, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Kurukshetra Mahatmya, publications of the Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board, together with the author's direct visits to the sites and local folklore. Where historical facts are available, they have been presented as facts, and where religious traditions exist, they have been clarified as such. This is the foundation of the impartiality and authenticity of this research.

It may finally be said that the lakes and kunds of Kurukshetra are not merely sources of water, but living memories of Indian culture. For ages, their waters have carried the message of faith, knowledge, penance, and culture. Whoever takes darshan of these tirthas beholds not merely a body of water, but comes face to face with India's spiritual tradition, thousands of years old.

Principal References

- The Rigveda
- The Mahabharata (Vana Parva, Shalya Parva, Bhishma Parva)
- The Vamana Purana
- The Kurukshetra Mahatmya
- Haryana Tourism Department — The 48 Kos Kurukshetra: A Cultural Journey
- Official publications and tirtha descriptions of the Kurukshetra Development Board
- The author's direct visit to the sites and research (2026)

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Section 2

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra: History, Tirtha Tradition, and Cultural Heritage

Chapter 15

A Detailed Study of the Principal Tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Part 1: The Tradition of the 48-Kos Pilgrimage and Its Significance

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra is one of the most ancient pilgrimage traditions of India. It is not merely a journey among temples and sacred sites, but a living journey through Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and the Sanatan philosophy of life. On this sacred circuit, devotees take darshan of those sites where sages performed penance, yajnas were conducted, the gods were worshipped, and many historic events of the Mahabharata took place.

Since ancient times, it has been believed that a reverent circumambulation of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra bestows upon a person not merely religious merit, but also a connection with India's cultural and spiritual heritage. It is for this reason that devotees, saints, researchers, and students of history from various states have, from time to time, undertaken pilgrimage to this sacred region.

In modern times, this tradition has been given a systematic form by the Kurukshetra Development Board. According to fresh surveys, 182 tirthas have now been documented within

the 48-kos region. These tirthas include Deva Tirthas, Rishi Tirthas, sites connected with the Mahabharata, Shaktipeeths, lakes, kunds, ancient temples, hermitages, and historical mounds. Their conservation and development continues without pause, so that this heritage may reach future generations safely.

During the writing of this work of research, the author too visited most of the principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra directly. At each site, local traditions, historical sources, archaeological remains, and government records were studied. The account presented in this chapter is therefore based not merely on information from books, but is also the result of direct observation and research.

This chapter presents a sequential introduction to the principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. For each tirtha, its location, Puranic significance, historical background, present form, and the author's direct experience will be described. This will not only make the significance of each tirtha known to readers, but will also provide them with an authentic guide should they undertake this pilgrimage in future.

This chapter is the heart of the tirtha tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, for through it readers will arrive at those sites which have, for thousands of years, kept alive the religious, cultural, and historical consciousness of India.

Part 2: The Shri Krishna Museum, the Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre, and Jyotisar

The journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not confined to ancient temples and tirthas alone. In the modern era, several institutions have been developed which present the Mahabharata, Lord Shri Krishna, Vedic culture, and Indian history through modern technology and a scientific perspective. Among these, the Shri Krishna Museum, the Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre, and Jyotisar Tirtha are particularly notable. A visit to these three sites is exceedingly useful for pilgrims, researchers, students, and tourists alike.

The Shri Krishna Museum

The Shri Krishna Museum was established with the purpose of bringing the life of Lord Shri Krishna, his ideals, and the culture of the Mahabharata era to the general public. The museum holds sculptures from various periods, paintings, replicas of manuscripts, coins, works of craftsmanship, and numerous artistic exhibits connected with the life of Shri Krishna.

This museum is not merely a centre of religious faith, but also an important institution for the study of Indian art, history, and archaeology. The material displayed here helps one understand that the personality of Lord Shri Krishna was not confined to being a religious deity alone; he was also a great philosopher, statesman, social reformer, and the founder of karma yoga.

The Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre

The Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre presents a fine confluence of modern technology and Indian history. Here, the Mahabharata War, the teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, and ancient Indian science are displayed in an engaging manner through audio-visual media.

The vast circular panorama, depicting the principal episodes of the Mahabharata War, gives visitors a vivid experience of the events of that era. At the same time, the science centre explains various scientific principles and experiments in simple language. This centre is thus a leading attraction of educational tourism as well as religious tourism.

Jyotisar: The Birthplace of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita

Among all the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, Jyotisar is held in the highest regard. According to Sanatan tradition, this is the very sacred place where, just before the beginning of the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. The message of the Gita became an invaluable text of life's philosophy not for Arjuna alone, but for the whole of humanity.

The ancient Akshaya Vatavriksha (eternal banyan tree) situated at Jyotisar is a particular object of attraction for devotees. Local tradition connects it with the memory of the Gita's teaching. The chariot built here, the statue of Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna, the lake, the temple, and the evening Light and Sound Show make the glory of this tirtha even more striking.

The Author's Experience

During this research journey, the author visited the Shri Krishna Museum, the Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre, and Jyotisar on numerous occasions. Each visit made it clear that anyone wishing to understand the history of Kurukshetra and the Mahabharata in their entirety should certainly take darshan of these three sites. The historical material available here, its modern presentation, and its spiritual atmosphere are exceedingly useful for researchers and general readers alike.

A visit to these sites makes clear that Kurukshetra is not merely a memory of the past, but remains, even today, a living centre of Indian culture, history, and the tradition of knowledge.

Part 3: Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, and Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth

Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, and Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, situated in the heart of Kurukshetra town, are four such principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra without which a pilgrimage to Kurukshetra is considered incomplete. All four of these tirthas are mentioned in various Puranas, the Mahabharata, local traditions, and modern religious literature. Every year, lakhs of devotees arrive from within India and abroad to take darshan of these sacred sites.

Brahma Sarovar

Brahma Sarovar is regarded, in Sanatan tradition, as a symbol of the beginning of creation. Religious belief holds that Lord Brahma began the work of creation right here. The vast lake, its paved ghats, the beautiful circumambulatory path, and the temple situated in its middle further enhance its splendour.

On special occasions — such as a solar eclipse, Somvati Amavasya, Gita Jayanti, and the International Gita Mahotsav — lakhs of devotees gather here for bathing and worship. At the time of the evening lamp offering, the sight of Brahma Sarovar is exceedingly enchanting, offering a remarkable experience of the divinity of Indian culture.

Sannihit Sarovar

Sannihit Sarovar, situated a short distance from Brahma Sarovar, is regarded as an exceedingly sacred tirtha of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. According to religious tradition, a divine confluence of seven sacred rivers is held to take place here on amavasya and special festivals. Devotees therefore come here for bathing, ancestral tarpan, shraddha, and acts of charity.

Numerous temples, dharamshalas, and religious institutions are situated around Sannihit Sarovar, granting it a place among the principal spiritual centres of Kurukshetra.

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple of Kurukshetra is regarded as one of the most ancient temples of Lord Shiva. According to local tradition, before the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna worshipped Lord Shiva here and received the

blessing of victory. It is for this reason that this temple is equally revered by devotees of both the Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions.

The ancient pond situated within the temple precincts is also regarded as religiously significant. Special religious events are held here during Mahashivratri and the month of Shravan.

Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth

Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, situated at Kurukshetra, is one of India's ancient Shakti tirthas. Religious belief holds that Mother Sati's right foot (ankle) fell here, on account of which it holds the honour of being a Shaktipeeth. This temple is an important centre of Shakti worship.

According to Mahabharata tradition, before the war, the Pandavas worshipped Mother Bhadrakali here and received the blessing of victory. Even today, devotees offer special worship and offerings here upon the fulfilment of their wishes.

The Author's Direct Experience

During the preparation of this work of research, the author visited all four of these tirthas directly on numerous occasions. Each visit made it clear that the spiritual identity of Kurukshetra is expressed most fully through these very tirthas. The vastness of Brahma Sarovar, the tranquillity of Sannihit Sarovar, the antiquity of Sthaneshwar Mahadev, and the divine faith of Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth — all of these together grant Kurukshetra its place among the world's greatest tirthas.

From a researcher's standpoint too, these four tirthas are exceedingly important, for through them the continuity of Vedic tradition, the Mahabharata, and Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shakta worship is clearly visible within a single cultural region.

Part 4: Pehowa (Prithudak), Adibadri, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, and Other Principal Tirthas

The significance of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not confined to Kurukshetra town alone. This sacred circuit holds numerous tirthas that form the invaluable heritage of the Vedic era, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and Indian cultural history. Among these, Pehowa (Prithudak), Adibadri, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, Karna ka Tila (Mirzapur), Narkatari, Kapil Muni Tirtha, Sitamai, and many other tirthas hold their own distinctive identity.

Pehowa (Prithudak)

Pehowa, renowned in ancient texts by the name Prithudak, is counted among India's principal ancestral tirthas. Religious belief holds that performing shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan for one's ancestors here brings them peace. Developed on the bank of the ancient course of the river Saraswati, this tirtha remains, even today, a principal centre of faith for devotees throughout the country. The records and ancient inscriptions found here are also important sources for historians.

Adibadri

Adibadri, situated in the Shivalik region of Yamunanagar district, is regarded as connected with the source region of the

river Saraswati. Ancient temples, archaeological remains, and a natural setting are found together here. The Government of Haryana has made particular efforts towards the conservation and development of this region. Adibadri holds an important place in the study of the Saraswati civilisation.

Bhishma Kund

Bhishma Kund, situated in the village of Dayalpur, is an exceedingly sacred tirtha connected with the memories of the Mahabharata. According to tradition, when Bhishma Pitamah lay upon his bed of arrows and grew thirsty, Arjuna pierced the earth with his arrow to bring forth a stream of water. That very place is worshipped with reverence today as Bhishma Kund. This tirtha is regarded as a source of inspiration towards sacrifice, truth, and adherence to dharma.

Banganga

Banganga is likewise an important tirtha of the Dayalpur region. Popular tradition connects it with the stream of water brought forth by Arjuna's arrow. Owing to its tranquil setting and religious significance, this tirtha is a centre of attraction for devotees and researchers alike.

Abhimanyupur

Abhimanyupur, situated near Kurukshetra, is connected with the memories of the Mahabharata's brave warrior, Abhimanyu. It is believed that events connected with the Chakravyuha took place in this region. The memorial developed here today, and local traditions, recall that

immortal saga of the Mahabharata in which the young Abhimanyu displayed unparalleled valour and sacrifice.

Karna ka Tila (Mirzapur)

Karna ka Tila, situated at Mirzapur, is renowned for its traditions connected with Karna, the great and generous warrior of the Mahabharata. This region is also considered important from an archaeological standpoint, and studies and surveys have been carried out here from time to time. This tirtha is an important centre of Mahabharata-era traditions and local folk beliefs.

Other Principal Tirthas

Besides these, the 48-Kos Kurukshetra holds many other important tirthas, including Kapil Muni Tirtha, Sitamai, Vedavati Tirtha, Parashar Tirtha, Jamadagni Tirtha, Markandeya Tirtha, Kapalmochan, and numerous other sites. Each tirtha has its own historical background, religious tradition, and cultural identity. It is this very diversity that grants the 48-Kos Kurukshetra its place among the world's richest pilgrimage circuits.

The Author's Direct Experience

For the writing of this work of research, the author visited these principal tirthas directly, spoke with local scholars and priests, and studied the available government and historical sources. In many places, ancient traditions remain alive to this day, while some tirthas, through modern development, welcome devotees in a new form.

The author's experience is that each tirtha of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a religious site, but a living chapter of Indian history, culture, and folk life. Without an integrated study of all these tirthas, it is not possible to fully understand the true glory of Kurukshetra.

Chapter 16

Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha, Dayalpur

Part 1: A Research Journey Towards the Immortal Memories of the Mahabharata

On 26 July 2026, an exceedingly important stage of my 48-Kos Shri Kurukshetra pilgrimage began. On this day, I had the good fortune of visiting and studying Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha, situated in the village of Dayalpur, together with my esteemed companions Master Jagbir Vaishnav, Tulsi Bairagi, Master Omprakash Bairagi, and Dinesh Swami. The purpose of this journey was not merely tirtha-darshan, but also a direct study of Mahabharata-era traditions, local folklore, and the present religious arrangements.

On arriving at Dayalpur, the tranquil and spiritual atmosphere of the temple complex naturally draws the mind. The information board installed at the entrance gate gives an introduction to the historical significance of the tirtha. The greenery spread all around, the atmosphere of the ancient temples, and the faith of devotees make clear that this place keeps the memories of the Mahabharata alive to this day.

[Photograph in original manuscript] Banganga Tirtha, Dayalpur — the information board installed at the entrance gate, introducing the historical significance of the tirtha.

We first took darshan at Banganga Tirtha. According to local belief and the information available within the temple

complex, during the Mahabharata War, when Pitamah Bhishma lay upon his bed of arrows, he grew intensely thirsty. At Lord Shri Krishna's command, Arjuna pierced the earth with his divine arrow, bringing forth a stream of the water of the Ganga, and it was with this very water that Pitamah Bhishma's thirst was quenched. In memory of this divine event, this place became renowned by the name Banganga Tirtha.

The symbolic form of Bhishma Pitamah's bed of arrows, situated within the tirtha precincts, brings vividly to devotees' minds that great episode of the Mahabharata. Every devotee who comes here reverently bows before Bhishma Pitamah, a symbol of dharma, sacrifice, integrity, and devotion to duty.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The symbolic form of Bhishma Pitamah's bed of arrows — Banganga Tirtha, Dayalpur.

A further distinction of this tirtha is that its religious atmosphere remains fully alive here to this day. Devotees arrive daily from far and wide for darshan and to offer their reverence. The tranquil atmosphere of the temple complex, its ancient form, and its religious dignity grant this place a distinctive standing among the important tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

During this journey, I closely examined the temple complex, Banganga, Bhishma Kund, and other important sites, and also gathered numerous photographs. These photographs are not merely mementoes of the journey; they are also important

documentation for this work of research, which will acquaint readers with the actual condition of the site.

Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha, situated at Dayalpur, are not merely a religious site, but an invaluable heritage of Indian history, the Mahabharata tradition, and Sanatan culture. On reaching this sacred land, one feels that history remains alive today as faith and devotion, connecting every visitor with their glorious heritage.

Part 2: Bhishma Kund, the Ancient Temple Complex, and Historical Heritage

After taking darshan at Banganga Tirtha, I made a detailed observation of Bhishma Kund and the temple complex situated around it. As a researcher, my purpose was not confined to religious faith alone, but also included a direct study of this tirtha's historical, cultural, and architectural significance. This tirtha at Dayalpur appears, even today, a living symbol of Mahabharata-era traditions.

Bhishma Kund, situated within the temple complex, is a centre of profound faith for devotees. According to local belief, this region is held to be connected with the memory of the divine stream of water that Arjuna brought forth with his arrow to quench Pitamah Bhishma's thirst during the Mahabharata War. Although various traditions exist regarding this connection, the faith of devotees renders this place exceedingly sacred.

While walking through the complex, my eye fell upon an ancient cave-like structure, whose architectural style appears exceedingly old. Built of thick bricks and lime mortar, this structure has borne witness to many changes over time. The old hermitage situated nearby, and the traditional form of the temple complex, give a sense of the antiquity of this place.

[Photograph in original manuscript] An ancient cave-like structure from the Mahabharata era — an ancient entrance built of thick bricks and lime mortar.

[Photograph in original manuscript] An ancient hermitage situated within the temple complex, giving a sense of the antiquity of this place.

The temple complex also holds the Shri Vishweshwar Mahadev Temple, the Mata Bala Sundari Temple, and the south-facing Trimukhi Balaji (Hanuman ji) Temple. Worship is conducted reverently at these temples every day. This makes clear that this tirtha is not confined to the memories of the Mahabharata alone, but continues, even today, to carry its tradition forward as a living religious centre.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author before the Mata Bala Sundari Temple — temple complex, Dayalpur.

During my visit, it became clear that particular attention is paid to cleanliness, religious discipline, and a spiritual atmosphere within the temple complex. Devotees take darshan with great reverence, and the local caretakers (sevayats) also appear continually engaged in maintaining the dignity of the tirtha.

During this journey, I gathered numerous photographs of Bhishma Kund, Banganga, the ancient cave, the temple complex, and other important sites. These images are not merely mementoes of the journey; they are also important visual evidence for this work of research. In future, they will prove useful to researchers and readers in understanding the actual condition of this tirtha.

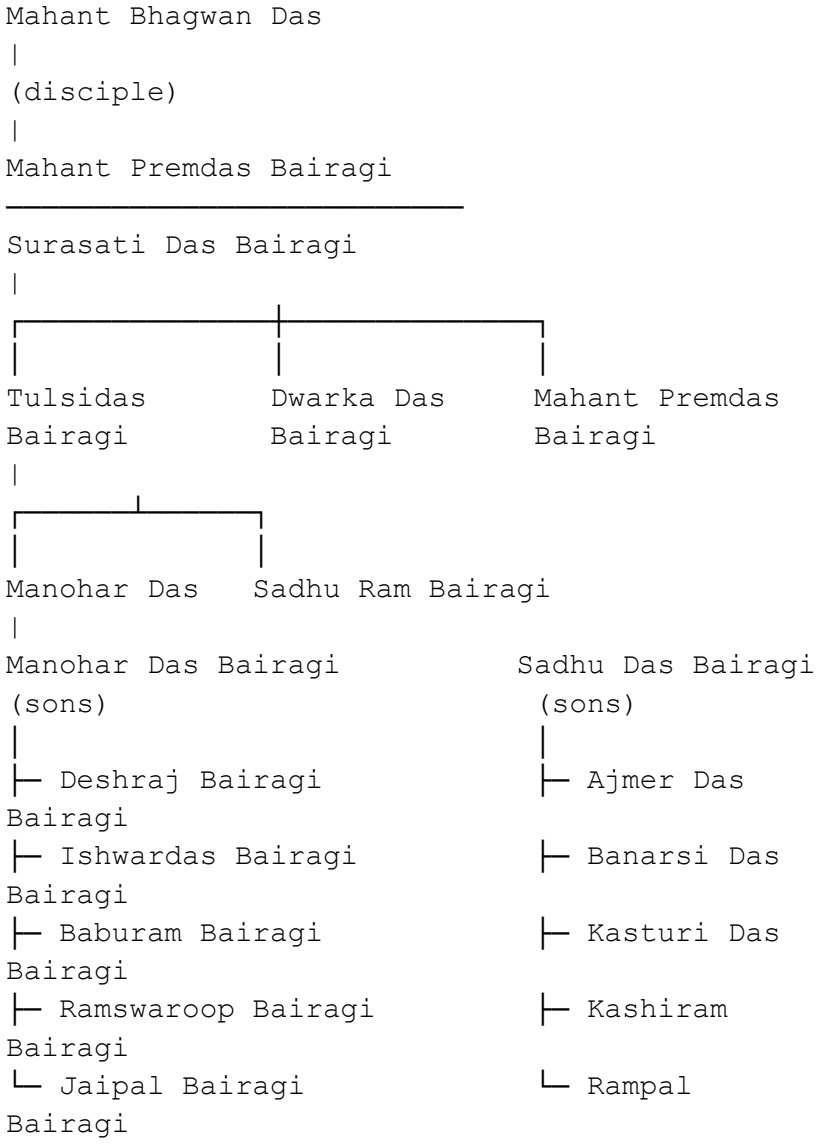
The visit to Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha at Dayalpur was, for me, not merely a religious journey, but an opportunity for direct study of the invaluable heritage of Indian history, the Mahabharata tradition, and Sanatan culture. Being present upon this sacred land, I felt that the cultural heritage of Kurukshetra remains alive today with its original dignity and faith intact.

Part 3: The Vaishnava Bairagi Tradition and the Temple's System of Worship and Service

The most significant feature of Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha, situated at Dayalpur, is that the worship and religious traditions here continue to be conducted, even today, in accordance with the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition. For many generations, Bairagi saints and caretaker families have continuously maintained the service, conservation, and religious traditions of this sacred tirtha. It is for this reason that this tirtha remains alive today with its original religious dignity.

According to local tradition, the guru-disciple and family lineage of this tirtha has continued in the following manner —

The Lineage of the Vaishnava Bairagi Tradition



This lineage makes clear that the system of worship and service at Bhishma Kund and Banganga Tirtha, Dayalpur, was never confined to a single individual, but was carried forward, generation after generation, by Vaishnava Bairagi saints and their caretaker families. This tradition has made an important contribution towards keeping the temple's religious propriety, method of worship, and the dignity of the tirtha unimpaired.

During my direct visit of 26 July 2026, it became clear that this tirtha remains, even today, a living centre of devotion, service, and Sanatan culture. Alongside the historical memories of the Mahabharata, the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition here grants this place a distinctive standing among the principal and distinctive tirthas of the 48-Kos Shri Kurukshetra.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author with fellow companions of the research journey, at the Shri Krishna Museum, Kurukshetra.

Chapter 17

Tirthas Associated with Karna: History and Tradition

Part 1: A Research Journey to the Karmabhoomi of Karna (26 July 2026)

On 26 July 2026, as part of the research for "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," my journey brought me to the ancient sites associated with Mahatma Karna, the great and generous warrior of the Mahabharata era. The purpose of this journey was not merely to take darshan, but also to undertake a direct study of these historical and Puranic sites, to observe local traditions, and to document their historical significance.

During the journey, we first observed the ancient mound protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), known as 'Raja Karna ka Kila' (Mirzapur, Kurukshetra). This protected site is regarded, even today, as an important centre of Mahabharata-era traditions and local folklore. The information board installed here, and the protected complex, make clear the historical significance of this site.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The information board protected by the Archaeological Survey of India — the ancient mound of Raja Karna ka Kila, Mirzapur, Kurukshetra.

After this, we took darshan of an ancient well from the Mahabharata era. According to local belief, this well is held to be connected with traditions from Karna's time, and remains, even today, a centre of devotees' faith. On seeing so ancient a water source, one naturally feels that history preserves its marks not merely in texts, but upon the earth as well.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author beside the ancient well from the Mahabharata era — a water source connected, according to local tradition, with the time of Karna.

In the next stage of the journey, we took darshan of the statues of Mahatma Karna and his wife Padmavati. Through these statues, local society continues, even today, to remember Karna's generosity, valour, and devotion to dharma. The ancient atmosphere surrounding these statues grants this place an even greater spiritual and historical significance.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author and fellow companions of the research journey before the statues of Mahatma Karna and Padmavati.

The vast banyan tree situated within this same complex is likewise a particular object of attraction. In local tradition, it is regarded as exceedingly ancient and worthy of worship. Its vast branches stand today as though a silent witness to centuries of history. Meditating near this banyan tree, one experiences a remarkable confluence of nature, history, and faith.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The ancient and venerated banyan tree situated within the complex, where devotees continue to worship to this day.

This research journey of 26 July 2026 thus proved, for me, to be not merely a tirtha-darshan, but an important chapter in the direct study of Mahabharata-era heritage. This journey made it clear that, upon the sacred land of Kurukshetra, history, archaeology, and folk tradition remain, even today, deeply intertwined with one another.

Part 2: The Generosity of Mahatma Karna, Archaeological Evidence, and Local Traditions

Karna, the great and generous hero of the Mahabharata, is counted among the supreme symbols, in Indian culture, of sacrifice, valour, integrity, and generosity. The son of Lord Surya and the eldest son of Mother Kunti, Karna faced difficult circumstances throughout his life, yet never wavered from his word, his self-respect, and the principles of charity. This is why numerous tirthas connected with him are remembered today, in the Kurukshetra region, with reverence and honour.

The ancient mound (fort) of Raja Karna, situated in the Mirzapur region of Kurukshetra, is regarded in local tradition as an important site connected with Karna. This site has been protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, confirming its historical significance. Although the available archaeological remains do not present conclusive evidence of a direct connection with the Mahabharata era, this site has nonetheless remained an important centre of ancient civilisation and continuous human settlement. It is for this reason that it is of particular interest to historians, archaeologists, and devotees alike.

According to local popular belief, it was in this very region that Mahatma Karna daily gave gifts of gold, grain, cows, and cloth to Brahmins, ascetics, and the poor. Karna's generosity was so renowned that he received the title 'Danveer Karna' — the great and generous Karna. The Mahabharata describes how Lord Shri Krishna and Indra, on various occasions, tested his generosity, and Karna upheld the dharma of charity even at the cost of his own life.

Regarding the ancient well from the Mahabharata era observed during the journey, local society believes it to be connected with traditions from Karna's time. Although this belief still requires historical examination, this well has nonetheless remained a centre of reverence for centuries and forms an integral part of the region's cultural memory.

Similarly, the statues of Mahatma Karna and his wife Padmavati offer an introduction to the living folk tradition of this region. Devotees who come here recall Karna's generosity, valour, and devotion to dharma, and pay him tribute. This tradition shows that the characters of the Mahabharata are not confined to texts alone, but remain alive, even today, in popular faith.

The vast banyan tree situated within the complex likewise holds particular significance. In Indian culture, the banyan tree is regarded as a symbol of longevity, stability, knowledge, and spiritual practice. Sitting in its shade, it seems as though this tree, standing as a silent witness to many generations and

centuries of history, continues even today to guard this sacred land.

These tirthas associated with Karna are thus not merely centres of religious faith, but also important sources of Indian history, folk tradition, archaeological heritage, and cultural memory. Their conservation and scientific study is our shared responsibility towards future generations.

Part 3: The Present Religious Tradition, Conservation, and the Conclusion of the Journey

During this research journey undertaken on 26 July 2026, it became clear that these tirthas associated with Karna are not merely historical or Puranic monuments, but remain, even today, centres of living faith for the local community. Devotees arrive here daily for darshan, circumambulate the ancient banyan tree, and, recalling Mahatma Karna's generosity and devotion to dharma, resolve to practise charity and service in their own lives.

During the journey, we made a direct observation of the ancient well connected with Mahabharata-era tradition, the statues of Mahatma Karna and Padmavati, Raja Karna's fort protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, and the vast banyan tree, all situated within the complex. All these sites made clear that, upon the sacred land of Kurukshetra, history, faith, and culture remain, even today, deeply interconnected.

The vast banyan tree is the particular hallmark of this tirtha. In Indian culture, the banyan tree is regarded as a symbol of

immortality, knowledge, patience, and Sanatan tradition. Its vast branches and extensive shade give the impression that this tree, standing as a silent sentinel of Mahabharata-era memories, has guarded this sacred land for centuries. Devotees circumambulate it, praying for happiness, prosperity, and longevity.

This journey also made clear that the conservation of such historical and religious sites is the responsibility not merely of government departments, but of society as well. If the scientific study, proper conservation, and authentic promotion of these sites continues without pause, future generations too will be able to become acquainted with their glorious cultural heritage.

For me, this journey was not merely a tirtha-darshan, but an important stage in the research for "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna." Direct observation, the study of local folklore, archaeological evidence, and religious traditions made an important contribution towards rendering this chapter more authentic and fact-based.

The conclusion of this chapter is this: Mahatma Karna is one of those immortal heroes of Indian culture whose generosity, valour, devotion to his word, and adherence to dharma continue, even today, to inspire society. This sacred land of Kurukshetra, holding his memories, will forever remain venerated as an invaluable heritage of Indian history and Sanatan culture.

Chapter 18

The Forests, Hermitages, and Places of Penance of the Pandavas

Part 1: The Sacred Tradition of the Seven Forests of Ancient Kurukshetra

Mahabharata-era Kurukshetra was not merely a battlefield; it was also a great centre of the Vedic sages' penance, sacrificial land, and the hermitage tradition. Within this sacred region, situated between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati, numerous sages performed penance, taught the Vedas, and kept the unbroken light of dharma, knowledge, and culture burning. It is for this reason that ancient texts call Kurukshetra 'Dharmakshetra' and 'the land of the sages'.

The Vamana Purana and other ancient texts describe how seven principal sacred forests (Saptavan) existed within the 48-kos Kurukshetra. These forests held numerous hermitages, sacrificial sites, and grounds of penance, where sages practised penance, spiritual discipline, and Vedic observances. The Vamana Purana (34/1–5) names them as Kamyaka Vana, Aditi Vana, Vyasa Vana, Phalki (Phalaki) Vana, Surya Vana, Madhuvana, and Sheet Vana.

At present, these ancient forests are identified with various villages of Haryana. According to local tradition and the

account published by the Kurukshetra Development Board, they are identified as follows —

- Kamyaka Vana — the present-day Kamoda (Kamauda) region.
- Aditi Vana — present-day Abhimanyupur.
- Sheet Vana — present-day Sivan.
- Phalki (Phalaki) Vana — present-day Faral.
- Surya Vana — present-day Sajuma.
- Madhuvana — present-day Mohana.
- Vyasa Vana — the present-day Varthali (Barthali) region.

The significance of these forests was not confined to natural beauty alone. In the Vedic age, forests themselves were the principal centres of education, spiritual discipline, and spiritual life. Gurukulas, hermitages, and sacrificial halls were generally established within these very tranquil forests. Here, the study of the Vedas, yajna, penance, yoga, and scholarly debate took place. The Pandavas, Shri Krishna, and numerous sages are held to have had a direct or indirect connection with these regions during the Mahabharata era.

Kamyaka Vana finds particular mention in the Mahabharata. During the early period of their exile, the Pandavas resided for some time in Kamyaka Vana. In this very forest, numerous great sages guided them and taught them the profound principles of dharma, ethics, and life. Kamyaka Vana is held to bear witness to many important events of the Mahabharata.

Aditi Vana is connected with the penance of Devamata Aditi. According to the Puranas, Devamata Aditi performed rigorous penance in this very forest for the welfare of her sons and the

restoration of the gods' victory. Pleased by this penance, Lord Vishnu resolved to take the Vamana incarnation. Aditi Vana is therefore regarded as a symbol of motherhood, penance, and divine grace.

Although the original form of these forests has changed with time, their names, local traditions, and religious memories remain alive today. This is why a journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a tirtha-darshan, but also a journey through India's ancient forest culture, hermitage tradition, and Vedic civilisation.

Part 2: The Tradition of the Sages, Hermitage Culture, and Spiritual Heritage within the Seven Forests

In the culture of ancient India, forests were not merely groups of trees; they were living centres of knowledge, penance, spiritual discipline, and Vedic civilisation. The seven forests of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, in particular, are mentioned in the Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, and other Puranas. Numerous sages' hermitages were established within these forests, where the study of the Vedas, yajna, penance, yogic discipline, and the education of disciples took place. It is for this reason that Kurukshetra is called not merely Dharmakshetra, but also the sacred land of the tradition of the sages.

Vyasa Vana, connected today with the Varthali (Barthali) region, is regarded as connected with the memory of Maharishi Ved Vyasa. Maharishi Ved Vyasa is a great pillar of

the Indian tradition of knowledge. He divided the Vedas, composed the Mahabharata, and gave systematic form to the tradition of the eighteen great Puranas. According to local belief, the region of Vyasa Vana has remained an important centre of the sages' spiritual discipline and Vedic study.

Surya Vana, identified with the present-day Sajuma region, is regarded as a principal centre of sun-worship. Vedic literature describes the sun as the giver of life to the whole of creation, the source of energy, and a symbol of truth. In ancient times, numerous sages performed sun-worship, the chanting of the Gayatri mantra, and yajnas in this forest. The tradition of Surya Vana reflects a remarkable confluence, in Indian culture, of nature and the worship of the divine.

Madhuvana, connected with the present-day Mohana region, was regarded as an exceedingly suitable place for spiritual practitioners on account of its tranquil setting and natural abundance. The Puranas describe how sages practised penance for long periods in such forests. Madhuvana was not merely a symbol of natural beauty, but also an important centre of spiritual practice and self-reflection.

Sheet Vana, identified with present-day Sivan, was regarded as suitable for the residence of sages on account of its tranquil and gentle character. According to local tradition, numerous hermitages were situated here, where Vedic education and religious observances were organised. Although the physical remains of these hermitages have vanished with time, their memory remains preserved in local folklore even today.

Phalki (Phalaki) Vana, whose present form is seen in the Faral region, likewise holds an important place among the seven forests. This forest was renowned for the sages' penance and yajnas. Its natural setting was exceedingly conducive to spiritual practice. Many scholars hold that these forests played an important role in developing Vedic culture and the gurukul tradition.

A study of these seven forests makes clear that ancient Kurukshetra was not merely the site of the Mahabharata War; it was a vast centre of India's hermitage system, gurukul tradition, Vedic education, the culture of the sages, and spiritual practice. The hermitages established within these forests propagated dharma, philosophy, the Vedas, the Upanishads, and Indian values of life, an influence that was felt across the whole of Indian civilisation.

Today, the original natural form of these forests has changed with time, but their names, the religious beliefs connected with them, and their cultural memories remain alive even now. This is why a journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a tirtha-darshan, but also a journey through the sight of India's ancient forest culture, the tradition of the sages, and its spiritual heritage.

Part 3: The Pandavas' Exile, Its Present Form, and the Need for Conservation

A study of the Mahabharata makes clear that forests were not merely natural resources, but great centres of dharma,

knowledge, penance, and self-reflection. An important part of the Pandavas' exile too was spent in such forests and hermitages, where they had the company of numerous great sages. The teachings, spiritual company, and guidance of the sages gave the Pandavas the strength to remain steadfast upon the path of dharma, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Kamyaka Vana holds particular significance in the Mahabharata. During their exile, the Pandavas resided here and received knowledge of dharma, ethics, statecraft, and life's philosophy from numerous great sages. The dialogues of the Pandavas with Maharishi Vyasa, Maharishi Markandeya, Maharishi Lomasha, and many other sages are described in important episodes of the Mahabharata. These episodes make clear that forests were not merely places of residence, but centres of spiritual education and Indian culture.

The system of the hermitages situated within these forests was exceedingly disciplined. Gurus taught their disciples the Vedas, the Upanishads, Dhanurveda, Ayurveda, astrology, grammar, yoga, and the scriptures of dharma. Alongside education, disciples were also trained in values of life such as service, self-restraint, penance, truth, non-violence, compassion, and the conservation of nature. It was this very hermitage tradition that gave Indian civilisation its moral and cultural foundation.

Over time, the original form of these ancient forests has changed considerably. Growing urbanisation, industrialisation, the construction of new roads, and the expansion of agriculture have affected the vast extent of these

forests. Today, these seven forests can be identified chiefly through their ancient names, local traditions, and a few preserved green spaces. Where hermitages of sages and dense forests once stood, in many places today one finds villages, towns, industrial areas, and structures of modern development.

During my direct journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it was satisfying to observe that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work in the conservation, identification, installation of information boards, beautification, and development of routes for these ancient tirthas, forests, and cultural heritage sites. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, it was clear that the Board is making a serious effort to carry this ancient heritage forward to the new generation. If such work of conservation, tree-planting, and the development of historical sites continues in this manner in future, this invaluable cultural and natural heritage of Kurukshetra can remain safe for generations to come.

Forests are the soul of Indian culture. They are not merely groups of trees, but symbols of life, knowledge, and spiritual consciousness. Today, when environmental conservation has become a necessity for the whole world, the tradition of these ancient forests of Kurukshetra also conveys to us a message of reverence for nature, balance, and co-existence. This is the very vision of Sanatan culture, in which nature and humanity are held to be complementary to one another.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that the seven forests of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, the tradition of the sages, and Mahabharata-era history. Their conservation is the responsibility not merely of government, but of every citizen of society. As long as we hold our natural and cultural heritage in respect, this immortal stream of Sanatan culture will continue to flow without pause.

Principal References

- The Vamana Purana (34/1–5) — the original verse-reference for the seven forests
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Chapter 19

The Saptavan and the Ancient Forest Culture

Part 1: The Origin of Forest Culture in Indian Civilisation and the Seven Forests of Kurukshetra

Forest culture has held an exceedingly important place in the development of Indian civilisation. From the Vedic age through to the Mahabharata era, forests were not merely groups of trees; they were living centres of knowledge, penance, education, medicine, yajna, and spiritual practice. The foundation of India's ancient hermitage system likewise lay in its forests. Great sages generally established their hermitages on riverbanks or within dense forests, where, amid a natural setting, disciples were taught the Vedas, the Upanishads, philosophy, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, and the values of life.

Ancient texts regard the forest as an integral part of human life. The Rigveda, the Atharvaveda, the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, and other Puranas describe the glory of forests in many places. In Indian thought, trees were held to be equal to the gods, and the protection of nature was accepted as part of dharma. This is why plants such as the peepal, the banyan, the ashoka, the bael, the palash, the neem, and the tulsi came to hold religious significance.

According to the Vamana Purana, the 48-Kos Kurukshetra held seven principal forests, collectively called the Saptavan. These forests were not merely natural areas, but also principal

centres of religious, cultural, and educational activity. The names of these seven forests are —

- Kamyaka Vana (present-day Kamoda)
- Aditi Vana (present-day Abhimanyupur)
- Sheet Vana (present-day Sivan)
- Phalki (Phalaki) Vana (present-day Faral)
- Surya Vana (present-day Sajuma)
- Madhuvana (present-day Mohana)
- Vyasa Vana (present-day Varthali)

Numerous sages' hermitages were situated within these forests. Here developed the tradition of yajna, penance, Vedic study, scholarly debate, and gurukul education. Traditions connected with the penance and residence of Maharishi Ved Vyasa, Maharishi Markandeya, Maharishi Lomasha, Maharishi Durvasa, and many other sages remain alive today in the Kurukshetra region through folklore and tirthas.

These forests held particular significance in the Mahabharata era as well. During their exile, the Pandavas resided in numerous hermitages, received the blessing of sages, and undertook a deep study of dharma and ethics. Lord Shri Krishna too came to these grounds of penance on numerous occasions and held dialogue with the sages. The seven forests of Kurukshetra have thus been important witnesses to the spiritual, philosophical, and historical development of Indian culture.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to directly observe the present-day sites connected with these seven forests. Although the original form

of these forests has changed with time, their names, the religious beliefs connected with them, and local traditions continue, even today, to keep this great heritage alive. On reaching these sites, one naturally feels that this land is the foundation not merely of history, but of India's Sanatan cultural consciousness as well.

It would therefore not be an exaggeration to say that the seven forests of Kurukshetra are not merely a geographical region, but immortal symbols of Indian knowledge, penance, the worship of nature, and Sanatan culture.

Part 2: The Religious, Cultural, and Environmental Significance of the Seven Forests

In Indian culture, forests were not merely natural resources; they were regarded as the foundation of dharma, philosophy, education, medicine, and spiritual life. From the Vedic age through to the Mahabharata era, most of India's great traditions of knowledge developed within forests. It is for this reason that our ancient texts call the forest 'Tapovana' (a forest of penance), 'Siddhabhoomi' (a land of the accomplished), and 'the abode of sages'. The seven forests of Kurukshetra are living examples of this great tradition.

The seven forests described in the Vamana Purana were not merely religious tirthas; they were principal centres of gurukul education, Vedic study, yajna, yoga, Ayurveda, and spiritual practice. Each forest held its own distinct religious and cultural significance. In one, the tradition of sun-worship developed; in

another, great sages practised penance; and in yet another, yajnas and Vedic observances were organised. These forests played an important role in bestowing knowledge, science, and spiritual consciousness upon Indian culture.

The fundamental purpose of the ancient hermitage system was to live a balanced life amid nature. Sages gave their disciples not merely knowledge of the scriptures, but also taught them the values of respect for, and the conservation of, trees, rivers, animals and birds, and the whole of nature. It is for this reason that the worship of the five great elements — earth, water, fire, air, and space — developed within Indian culture.

The environmental significance of the seven forests was likewise exceedingly extensive. These forests formed the basis of the balance of rainfall, the conservation of groundwater, biodiversity, and natural equilibrium. Situated on the banks of the Saraswati and other rivers, these forests kept the climate balanced and were the natural habitat of countless creatures. Indian sages had understood, thousands of years ago, that the conservation of nature is itself the foundation of the protection of human life.

The Pandavas' exile in the Mahabharata era is likewise proof that forests were not merely places of residence, but centres for the attainment of inner strength, patience, penance, and knowledge. During their exile, the Pandavas visited the hermitages of numerous sages and gained knowledge of dharma, ethics, and life's philosophy. Lord Shri Krishna too, on numerous occasions, honoured the sages and conveyed the

message that the conservation of both knowledge and nature is equally necessary.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that the original form of these ancient forests has today largely disappeared. Owing to modern development, growing population, urbanisation, industrialisation, and the expansion of agriculture, most forests have now been transformed into villages, towns, and agricultural land. Nevertheless, the ancient names of these forests, the folk traditions connected with them, their tirthas, and their religious memories remain alive today, standing as important evidence of our cultural heritage.

It is also worth noting that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out commendable work in the conservation and development of the tirthas, ancient sites, and cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra connected with these forests. The installation of information boards at various sites, beautification, the development of tirtha routes, and efforts to preserve historical identity are evidence that serious efforts are being made to carry our ancient heritage forward to the new generation. On the basis of my direct visits, this work appeared exceedingly commendable.

What is needed today is not merely the reading of history, but also an understanding of that forest culture which gave Indian civilisation its distinctive place in the world. It is only if we conserve trees, protect the environment, and hold our cultural

heritage in respect that we shall be able truly to pay genuine tribute to the tradition of our sages.

Part 3: The Revival of Forest Culture and the Direction of the Future

In Indian culture, forests have been not merely a part of the environment, but the very foundation of a philosophy of life. Our sages regarded nature as a mother and trees as the givers of life. This is why, from Vedic literature through to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, forest culture is described with the greatest reverence. The seven forests of Kurukshetra are living symbols of this very great tradition, which nourished dharma, knowledge, and spiritual consciousness for thousands of years.

Today, owing to modern development, urbanisation, industrialisation, growing population, and the expansion of roads and buildings, the original form of these ancient forests has largely disappeared. Where dense forests, hermitages, and sacrificial halls once stood, one finds today villages, towns, industrial areas, and agricultural land. This change is certainly the result of the necessity of development, but our natural and cultural heritage has also been affected alongside it.

During my direct research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it was satisfying to observe that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work towards the conservation of this great heritage. Information boards at various tirthas, beautification, the development of tirtha

routes, the conservation of religious sites, and efforts to preserve ancient identity are clearly visible. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, it became clear that the Board is not merely developing tourism, but is also making an effort to conserve Kurukshetra's thousands-of-years-old cultural identity. This work is truly commendable.

At the same time, there is also a need to ensure that the memory of these ancient seven forests is not confined to books alone. Wherever possible, tree-planting campaigns should once again be undertaken in the names of these forests, trees of local species should be planted, and schools, colleges, and social organisations should be connected with this campaign. This will make the new generation more aware of its history, environment, and culture.

The seven forests of Kurukshetra convey to us the message that nature and culture are not separate from one another. If forests remain safe, water, land, biodiversity, and cultural traditions will remain safe as well. This very message was given by the Vedic sages thousands of years ago, and it has become more relevant than ever before amid today's environmental crisis.

During this research journey, I came to feel that every tirtha, every ancient site, and every forest of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is connected with some important chapter of Indian civilisation. The conservation of these sites is not the responsibility of the government or of any single institution alone, but the collective responsibility of all of us as citizens.

The conclusion of this chapter is that the seven forests of Kurukshetra are an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, the tradition of the sages, and the worship of nature. Their conservation is not merely a matter of honouring the past, but also our duty towards future generations. It is only if we keep our cultural and natural heritage safe that this unbroken stream of Sanatan culture will continue to flow through the ages to come.

Chapter 20

Surya, Soma, and Other Vedic Tirthas

Part 1: Vedic Tradition and the Deva-Tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Ancient Indian texts call Kurukshetra not merely Dharmakshetra, but also the land of worship of the Vedic gods. The worship of numerous divine powers described in the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, and the Atharvaveda is connected with this sacred region. The Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, the Skanda Purana, and other Puranas likewise mention numerous Vedic tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Among these, Surya Tirtha, Soma Tirtha, Brahma Tirtha, Agni Tirtha, Indra Tirtha, Varuna Tirtha, and other sacred lakes and sacrificial sites are particularly notable.

In the Vedic age, nature and divinity were regarded as complementary to one another. The sun was regarded as the light of all creation and the source of energy; Soma, as a symbol of nectar, coolness, and spiritual consciousness; Agni, as the carrier of the yajna; and Indra, as the god of rain and strength. It is for this reason that numerous tirthas dedicated to these deities were established in Kurukshetra, where sages performed yajna, penance, and Vedic observances.

Surya Tirtha is described with particular reverence. In Indian tradition, Lord Surya is regarded as a directly visible deity, whose rays bestow life upon the whole of the animate and

inanimate world. The Vedic sages regarded the sun as a symbol of truth, knowledge, health, and radiance. Bathing, the offering of arghya, and sun-worship at Kurukshetra's Surya Tirtha are described as being of particular significance. It is believed that worshipping the Sun-god with faith and according to proper ritual bestows health, energy, and inner strength upon a person.

Soma Tirtha likewise holds an important place in Vedic tradition. The Rigveda gives a detailed description of Soma. Soma is regarded as a symbol of divine power, nectar, peace, and spiritual bliss. According to the Puranas, bathing and worship at Soma Tirtha bestow mental peace and spiritual progress. This tirtha is also held to be connected with the worship of the moon (Somadeva).

The significance of these Vedic tirthas of Kurukshetra is not merely religious, but cultural and historical as well. The yajnas held here, the Vedic observances, and the penance of the sages established this region as India's ancient spiritual capital. Even in the Mahabharata era, the glory of these tirthas remained unimpaired, and numerous kings, sages, and pilgrims came here to perform religious observances.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that people's reverence for these Vedic tirthas remains intact even today. In many places, ancient traditions remain alive today, and devotees continue to carry forward this thousands-of-years-old culture through bathing, charity, worship, and religious observances. This is the greatest

distinction of this sacred land — that an unbroken stream of faith continues to flow here, from the Vedic age to the present day.

Part 2: The Worship of the Vedic Gods and the Principal Deva-Tirthas of Kurukshetra

In Vedic literature, the worship of the gods was not merely a religious rite; it was also a means of establishing balance between nature, the cosmos, and human life. Numerous Vedic tirthas situated within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra bear witness to this very great tradition. Tirthas connected with Surya, Soma, Agni, Indra, Varuna, Brahma, and other Vedic deities are mentioned here in the Vamana Purana, the Mahabharata, the Skanda Purana, and other ancient texts. Bathing, charity, chanting, penance, and yajna at these tirthas are held to be exceedingly meritorious.

Surya Tirtha holds particular significance in Vedic tradition. Lord Surya is praised through numerous verses in the Rigveda. The sun is regarded as a symbol of the light, energy, health, truth, and dharma of the whole of creation. In ancient times, sages would offer arghya to the sun each morning and chant the Gayatri mantra. Kurukshetra's Surya Tirtha represents this very ancient tradition of sun-worship. It is believed that worshipping the Sun-god with faith and according to due observance bestows health, radiance, inner strength, and longevity.

Soma Tirtha is held to be connected with the Vedic deity Soma. The ninth Mandala of the Rigveda is chiefly devoted to describing the glory of Soma. In Vedic tradition, Soma is regarded as a symbol of nectar, coolness, mental peace, and spiritual bliss. In later traditions, Soma also came to be connected with the Moon-god. Bathing and worship at Kurukshetra's Soma Tirtha are held to be a means of purifying the mind, achieving mental balance, and attaining spiritual progress.

Agni Tirtha is a symbol of the Vedic yajna tradition. The Vedas call Agnidev the messenger between the gods and humankind. Every Vedic yajna was performed in the presence of fire. Agni Tirtha is thus not merely a religious site, but also a monument to the sacrificial tradition of Vedic civilisation.

Similarly, Indra Tirtha is held to be connected with Indra, the god of rain, valour, and prosperity. Indra receives the greatest mention in the Rigveda. He is a symbol of victory over the demons, and of rain and agricultural prosperity. In ancient times, farmers, kshatriyas, and those performing yajnas offered Indra particular worship.

Varuna Tirtha is a symbol of the significance of water. Varunadev is regarded as the presiding deity of water, truth, and the moral order. Owing to its connection with the Saraswati, the Drishadvati, and other rivers, the tradition of water-worship has been exceedingly ancient in the Kurukshetra region. Regarding water as the foundation of life, the sages gave rivers, lakes, and kunds the form of tirthas.

Besides these, Brahma Tirtha is held to be connected with the Creator, Brahma. According to tradition, Brahma performed numerous yajnas in the Kurukshetra region, on account of which this land became a great centre of the Vedic yajna tradition. This is why Kurukshetra has, since ancient times, held the honour of being called 'Dharmakshetra' and 'Yajnabhoomi'.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that people's reverence for these Vedic tirthas remains unimpaired even today. Devotees bathe, worship, and give charity at these tirthas on various festivals, on amavasya, on the full moon, during eclipses, and on occasions such as Gita Jayanti. This tradition establishes that Vedic culture is not merely a subject of history, but remains alive today, in a living form, within popular life.

Part 3: The Present Form, Conservation, and the Continuity of the Sanatan Tradition

The Surya, Soma, and other Vedic tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are not merely memories of ancient history; they remain, even today, living centres of Sanatan faith. For thousands of years, the tradition of bathing, worship, yajna, charity, chanting, and penance has continued here without interruption. Every year, on Gita Jayanti, a solar eclipse, Somvati Amavasya, Makar Sankranti, and other religious festivals, lakhs of devotees arrive at these tirthas from within India and abroad to offer their reverence. This makes clear that

Vedic culture remains alive today in the Indian collective consciousness with the very same devotion.

During my direct research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that many Vedic tirthas have, with time, lost their ancient form. Owing to natural change, the vanished flow of the river Saraswati, urbanisation, industrialisation, and modern development works, many ancient sites have now become part of villages, towns, and agricultural areas. Nevertheless, the religious tradition, popular belief, and cultural identity of these tirthas remain preserved even today.

A further pleasing experience during this research journey was that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work in the conservation, development, and promotion of the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The installation of information boards at numerous tirthas, cleanliness arrangements, the development of tirtha routes, the beautification of lakes, and the expansion of basic facilities for devotees show that serious efforts are being made to keep this great heritage safe. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, this work was clearly visible. This effort will prove exceedingly important in connecting future generations with their cultural roots.

Vedic tirthas are symbols not merely of religious sites, but also of the Indian tradition of knowledge, environmental conservation, and social harmony. The sun conveys to us the message of action, discipline, and energy; Soma, of peace and

balance; Agni, of yajna and dedication; Varuna, of water conservation; and Indra, of the balance of nature. Through the worship of these deities, our sages developed a remarkable tradition of establishing harmony between humanity and nature.

What is needed today is that we should not confine these Vedic tirthas to worship alone, but should also understand their historical, cultural, and environmental significance. Schools, colleges, research institutions, and social organisations should be connected with the study, conservation, and public awareness of these sites. This will enable the new generation to understand its ancient heritage and be inspired towards its conservation.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that the Surya, Soma, and other Vedic tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation. These tirthas are living symbols of the Vedic sages' penance, the yajna tradition, the worship of nature, and the unbroken stream of Sanatan culture. Their conservation is not merely a religious duty, but also our historical, cultural, and national responsibility. As long as the tradition of these tirthas remains alive, the light of Vedic culture will continue to guide future generations as well.

Chapter 21

The Rishi Tradition: Hermitages, Yajnas, and Gurukulas

Part 1: Kurukshetra — The Ground of Penance of the Vedic Sages

Kurukshetra is generally viewed in connection with the Mahabharata War alone, but its true character is far more extensive and ancient than this. A study of Vedic literature, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas makes clear that this land remained, for thousands of years, a great centre of the sages' penance, sacrificial land, hermitage culture, and gurukul tradition. It is for this reason that ancient texts have granted Kurukshetra such honorific titles as 'Dharmakshetra', 'Brahmakshetra', and 'the land of the sages'.

The Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Atharvaveda, the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, and the Brahma Purana describe the glory of Kurukshetra in numerous places. Situated between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati, this region was regarded by the Vedic sages as the most suitable place for spiritual practice, yajna, and the propagation of knowledge. Its tranquil natural setting, abundance of water, and extensive forest cover were ideal for hermitage life.

In the Vedic age, sages were not merely religious teachers; they were also the guides, philosophers, scientists, teachers,

physicians, and national thinkers of society. They preserved the Vedas, organised the yajna tradition, established gurukulas, and taught human life the balanced path of dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. The greatest distinction of Indian culture was precisely this — that the centre of knowledge was not the royal palace, but the hermitage of the sage.

The Kurukshetra region holds mention of the hermitages of numerous great sages. Traditions connected with the penance and residence of great sages such as Maharishi Ved Vyasa, Maharishi Vashishtha, Maharishi Vishwamitra, Maharishi Markandeya, Maharishi Durvasa, Maharishi Lomasha, Maharishi Kapila, Maharishi Gautama, Maharishi Parashar, and Maharishi Kanva form an important part of this region's cultural memory. Although the precise archaeological location of each hermitage is not available today, numerous tirthas, kunds, and local traditions continue, even now, to keep the memory of these sages alive.

The hermitage system of ancient India was not merely a place of residence for ascetics. Hermitages were complete centres of education, research, agriculture, the preparation of medicines, yoga, Ayurveda, astrology, scholarly debate, and character-building. Here, the sons of kings and the children of ordinary families received education alike. The relationship between guru and disciple was not confined to knowledge alone; training was given in discipline, service, humility, and self-reliance in every sphere of life.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to directly observe numerous tirthas, hermitage sites, and ancient regions where local traditions continue, even today, to preserve the memories of sages' residence, penance, and yajnas. Although the form of these sites has changed with time, their spiritual importance and cultural identity remain unimpaired even now.

It thus becomes clear that Kurukshetra was not merely the site of the Mahabharata War, but also a great centre of Indian knowledge tradition, the culture of the sages, the hermitage system, and gurukul education. This is the very land from which flowed such a stream of dharma, knowledge, penance, and sacrament that it granted Indian civilisation a distinctive identity in the world.

Part 2: The Yajna Tradition, Gurukul Education, and the Hermitage System

The most important features of Vedic civilisation were the tradition of the sages, the culture of yajna, and the system of gurukul education. Together, these three gave Indian society the foundation of knowledge, ethics, spirituality, and discipline. The sacred land of Kurukshetra remained a principal centre of this great tradition, where countless sages established their hermitages and conveyed the message of dharma and public welfare through yajnas.

Yajna was the fundamental basis of Vedic culture. The Vedas regard yajna not merely as the ritual of offering oblations into

fire, but as a symbol of dedication, public welfare, environmental conservation, and collective wellbeing. Various types of yajna are mentioned in the Rigveda and the Yajurveda. Through these yajnas, an effort was made to develop harmony, natural balance, and spiritual consciousness within society. The Puranas and the Mahabharata mention the tradition of Rajasuya, Ashvamedha, Agnishtoma, and other Vedic observances being held at numerous sacrificial sites in ancient Kurukshetra.

Kurukshetra is also called Yajnabhoomi. It is believed that numerous royal sages, great sages, and gods performed yajnas upon this sacred land. Brahma's yajna at the beginning of creation, King Kuru's penance, and the Vedic observances of various sages established this region as the capital of dharma and yajna. This is why numerous sacrificial halls and Vedic observances continue to be held here without interruption to this day.

The gurukul system of education has been an invaluable heritage of Indian culture. The purpose of education within gurukulas was not merely the attainment of learning, but also the building of character and the development of self-restraint, service, discipline, and a sense of devotion to nation. Students lived in their guru's hermitage and received education equally. There, the son of a prince and the child of an ordinary family studied together without any discrimination. The guru gave his disciples knowledge of the Vedas, the Vedangas, the Upanishads, grammar, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, astrology, yoga, philosophy, and ethics.

Life in the hermitages was exceedingly simple, disciplined, and self-reliant. Rising in the Brahma Muhurta of the early morning, bathing, evening prayer, yajna, study, the service of cows, tree-planting, agricultural work, the conservation of medicinal plants, and service to the guru were integral parts of daily life. Alongside education, respect for labour was also an important principle of the gurukul system. It was this very system that gave India such scholars, warriors, physicians, philosophers, and social reformers as granted Indian civilisation its distinctive place in the world.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to study numerous tirthas, ancient sites, and regions connected with the hermitage tradition, where Vedic yajna, Vedic recitation, religious observance, and the tradition of Sanskrit education remain alive even today. Although the original form of ancient gurukulas has changed with time, their cultural heritage remains preserved today through various hermitages, temples, and religious institutions.

It is clear that the tradition of the sages, the culture of yajna, and gurukul education enriched Indian civilisation not merely religiously, but also morally, intellectually, and socially. The land of Kurukshetra bears witness to this great heritage, where the light of knowledge and dharma has guided humanity for millennia.

Part 3: The Continuity of the Rishi Tradition, Its Conservation, and the Direction of the Future

The true foundation of Indian civilisation developed not in royal palaces, but in the hermitages of sages. The verses of the Vedas, the knowledge of the Upanishads, the composition of the epics, and the development of Ayurveda, yoga, philosophy, astrology, grammar, and Indian values of life took place upon the very sacred ground of hermitages and gurukulas. It was this great tradition that established India as 'Vishwaguru' — the teacher of the world. Kurukshetra remained a principal centre of this glorious tradition, where an unbroken stream of knowledge and penance flowed for millennia.

The traditions of Maharishi Ved Vyasa, Maharishi Vashishtha, Maharishi Vishwamitra, Maharishi Durvasa, Maharishi Markandeya, Maharishi Parashar, Maharishi Kanva, and many other sages remain alive today in the cultural memory of Kurukshetra. Although the original form of most ancient hermitages has changed with time, numerous tirthas, lakes, kunds, temples, and local traditions continue, even today, to preserve the memory of these sages' penance and pursuit of knowledge.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that Vedic traditions remain alive today in numerous hermitages, temples, and religious institutions. Vedic recitation, yajna, discourses on the Gita, the study of Sanskrit, yoga, the service of cows, and religious observances continue to be organised without interruption. It is satisfying

to observe that this thousands-of-years-old tradition of the sages continues, even today, to give society spiritual and cultural direction.

An important experience of this research journey was also that the Kurukshetra Development Board has made a notable contribution towards the conservation and development of the tirthas, hermitages, and ancient religious sites of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The beautification of tirthas, the installation of information boards, the development of tirtha routes, cleanliness arrangements, and the expansion of basic facilities for devotees show that serious efforts are being made to keep this great heritage safe. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, this work was clearly visible. This is not merely the development of tourism, but an important campaign for the conservation of India's ancient cultural heritage.

What is needed today is that the new generation should not remain confined to modern education alone, but should also understand the knowledge of the Indian sages, the gurukul system, environmental conservation, moral values, and the spirit of service. If Indian knowledge tradition, Sanskrit, yoga, Vedic literature, and cultural history are properly incorporated into education, the younger generation will be able to connect with its roots more strongly.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that the tradition of the sages, the hermitage system, the culture of yajna, and gurukul education at Kurukshetra are an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation. Their conservation is not merely

a religious duty, but also our cultural, historical, and national responsibility. It is only if we hold this great heritage of our sages in respect, and carry it forward to future generations, that the light of Sanatan culture's knowledge will continue to guide humanity through the ages.

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- Official publications and tirtha descriptions of the Kurukshetra Development Board
- The author's direct visit to the sites and research (2026)

Chapter 22

Pehowa (Prithudak Tirtha): Ancestral Rites, Shraddha, and Sanatan Tradition

Part 1: The History and Mahatmya of Prithudak Tirtha, and a Direct Journey

Pehowa, situated in Kurukshetra district, Haryana, whose ancient name is Prithudak, is regarded as one of India's most ancient and sacred ancestral tirthas. The glory of this tirtha is described in Vedic literature, the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, and other ancient texts. In Sanatan tradition, it is believed that shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan performed here with devotion bring satisfaction to one's ancestors and secure their blessing for their descendants. It is for this reason that Prithudak Tirtha holds a distinctive place among India's principal ancestral tirthas.

According to ancient tradition, the name 'Prithudak' is held to be connected with King Prithu. It is said that King Prithu performed tarpan and religious observances on behalf of his ancestors in this very sacred region. In time, the name Prithudak changed and the name Pehowa came into common use, but its religious standing and spiritual glory remain unchanged even today.

The significance of Pehowa is exceedingly important not only from a religious standpoint, but also from a historical and archaeological one. The Pehowa Inscription, recovered here, is

regarded as an important source for the history of early medieval northern India. This inscription sheds important light on the political, social, and religious life of that era, and establishes that Pehowa has been a distinguished tirtha and cultural centre since ancient times.

The significance of Pehowa is also connected with the river Saraswati. Ancient texts describe how numerous sages performed penance and conducted yajnas on the sacred bank of the Saraswati. It is for this reason that Prithudak Tirtha became a remarkable confluence of Vedic culture, ancestral sacrament, and the tradition of the sages. Even today, devotees from various states of the country come here to perform shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan on behalf of their ancestors.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the good fortune of visiting this sacred tirtha on numerous occasions. Together with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami, I directly took darshan of, and studied, Prithudak Tirtha, the bank of the Saraswati, the ancient temples, and the religious sites. Each visit made it clear that Pehowa is not merely a tirtha, but a great centre of Sanatan culture that has remained alive for thousands of years. The faith of devotees here, the observance of Vedic traditions, and the religious atmosphere keep the historical dignity of this sacred land unimpaired to this day.

The purpose of my research has not been merely to mention Puranic stories, but to understand, and convey to readers, the

true character of Pehowa on the basis of the available historical sources, archaeological evidence, local traditions, and direct visits to the site. The significance of Prithudak Tirtha also lies in the fact that dharma, history, archaeology, and popular faith appear here in integrated form, alongside one another.

Pehowa (Prithudak) is thus not merely a tirtha, but an invaluable heritage of Indian ancestral sacrament, Vedic tradition, Saraswati civilisation, and Sanatan culture, whose significance remains today just as great as it was in ancient times.

Part 2: Shraddha, Tarpan, the Bank of the Saraswati, and the Living Tradition of Pehowa

The greatest significance of Pehowa (ancient Prithudak) lies in its ancestral rites. In Sanatan Dharma, it is believed that a person is connected not merely with their present life, but also with the tradition of their ancestors. The Vedas, the Smritis, and the Puranas therefore prescribe shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan as a means of expressing reverence towards one's ancestors. Among India's principal ancestral tirthas of particular significance, Pehowa is held in exceedingly high regard.

The Mahabharata and the Puranas describe how religious observances performed within the Kurukshetra region bear special merit. At Pehowa, devotees perform tarpan according to due ritual in memory of their ancestors and pray for the

peace of their souls. In particular, on amavasya, Pitru Paksha, Somvati Amavasya, a solar eclipse, and other auspicious occasions, thousands of devotees arrive here from various states of the country. This tradition has continued without interruption for centuries.

The religious life of Pehowa is also deeply connected with the ancient tradition of the river Saraswati. Although the ancient flow of the Saraswati is not directly visible today, the cultural memory and religious traditions of this region continue to keep that very Vedic stream alive. The numerous temples, ghats, and religious sites situated on the bank of the Saraswati are proof that this region has, since ancient times, been a principal centre of Vedic yajnas, the sages' penance, and religious observance.

The ancient temples, lakes, ghats, and dharamshalas situated in the town of Pehowa remain devoted to the service of pilgrims even today. Here, numerous priestly families have conserved genealogical records for generations. Families arriving from various states of India have had the particulars of their ancestors recorded in these genealogical registers. From the standpoint of the study of history and sociology, these records are regarded as exceedingly important, for they preserve the systematic details of many families across generations.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to visit Pehowa on numerous occasions. Together with my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson,

Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami, I directly observed the bank of the Saraswati, the ghats, the temples, and the religious sites. On each visit, the unwavering faith of devotees, the observances duly performed by the priests, and the tranquil spiritual dignity of the tirtha made it clear that Prithudak is not merely a subject of history, but remains, even today, a centre of living Sanatan tradition.

During my study, it also became clear that the significance of Pehowa is not confined to religious observances alone. This town is also an important centre for the study of Indian history, archaeology, culture, and social traditions. Its religious traditions, the ancient system of genealogical record-keeping, and the beliefs connected with the Saraswati present powerful evidence of the continuity of Indian civilisation.

Pehowa (Prithudak) is thus a remarkable confluence of faith, history, culture, and Vedic tradition. Here, the past and the present continue to appear together, even today. This is its greatest distinction, which grants it a place among the most important tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

Part 3: Historical Significance, the Research Journey, and Conclusion

Pehowa (ancient Prithudak) is not merely a sacred tirtha, but an invaluable heritage of Indian history, archaeology, and Sanatan culture. The Pehowa Inscription recovered here (approximately 9th century CE), held to date from the reign of the Gurjara-Pratihara emperor Mahendrapala I, is an

important source for the history of northern India. This inscription yields important information regarding the administrative system, religious life, tirtha tradition, and social structure of that era. This is why historians and archaeologists include Prithudak among India's important historical sites.

Another distinctive feature of Pehowa is its tradition of genealogical record-keeping. Numerous priestly families have, for centuries, conserved the lineage, gotra, and family particulars of pilgrims. These genealogical records are exceedingly important documents for the study of Indian society, culture, and family history, and this tradition continues without interruption to this day.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the good fortune of visiting Prithudak Tirtha on numerous occasions. On this journey, my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami accompanied me. We undertook a direct study of the bank of the Saraswati, the sacred ghats, the ancient temples, the religious sites, and the tirtha region on foot. I had the opportunity to closely observe the rites of shraddha, tarpan, and pind-daan being reverently performed by devotees. The tranquil atmosphere of the tirtha, the sound of Vedic mantras, and the unwavering faith of devotees made this journey exceedingly inspiring.

As a researcher, my purpose was not merely to describe religious beliefs, but also to directly understand the historical, cultural, and social heritage of this tirtha. During this journey,

conversation with local people, priests, and persons connected with the tirtha yielded much important information, which helped make this chapter more authentic.

During my study, it also became clear that, although the character of the town has changed with time, the religious tradition of Prithudak remains alive today with full devotion. Local society, temple committees, the priestly class, and the administration continue to make an ongoing contribution towards the conservation of this sacred heritage.

It is also worth noting that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out commendable work in the conservation, beautification, installation of information boards, development of tirtha routes, and expansion of facilities for devotees at the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, including Pehowa. On the basis of my direct visits, it became clear that this institution is working seriously not merely for tourism, but also for the conservation of India's ancient cultural heritage.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that Pehowa (Prithudak) is a remarkable confluence of Indian ancestral sacrament, Saraswati civilisation, Vedic tradition, and historical consciousness. This tirtha is not merely a memory of the past, but remains today a source of inspiration for a living Sanatan culture. Its conservation and enhancement is the responsibility of all of us, so that future generations too may continue to draw inspiration from this invaluable heritage.

Principal References

- The Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana
- The Pehowa Inscription — from the reign of the Gurjara-Pratihara emperor Mahendrapala I (approximately 885–910 CE), which mentions the construction of Vishnu temples on the bank of the Saraswati by the Tomara chief Gogga and his brothers
- Kurukshetra Development Board — official tirtha description
- The author's direct visit to the site and research (2026) — fellow travellers: Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, Bhavesh Swami, Divyanshi Swami

Chapter 23

From Pehowa to Thanesar: Archaeological Evidence

Part 1: The Living Heritage of an Ancient Civilisation

The sacred land of Kurukshetra is not merely a centre of religious faith, but also a rich archaeological heritage of Indian civilisation and history. In particular, the region from Pehowa (ancient Prithudak) to Thanesar (ancient Sthaneshwar) has borne witness to a cultural continuity spanning thousands of years. The inscriptions, ancient mounds, sculptures, temple remains, brick structures, coins, pottery, and other archaeological material recovered in this region establish that this land remained continuously inhabited, and exceedingly rich from a cultural standpoint, through the Vedic age, the Mahabharata era, the later Vedic period, the Gupta period, the Pushyabhuti dynasty, and the medieval era.

The ancient name of Pehowa was Prithudak. This town was renowned as a principal tirtha and cultural centre situated on the bank of the river Saraswati. The Pehowa Inscription recovered here (approximately 9th century CE), held to belong to the Gurjara-Pratihara period, is an important source for the history of northern India. This inscription yields invaluable information regarding the religious system, land grants, tirtha administration, and social life of that era. Historians include it among the principal epigraphic evidence of Haryana.

Thanesar, on the other hand, whose ancient name is Sthaneshwar, has been an exceedingly important town from a religious, political, and cultural standpoint since ancient times. This town became particularly renowned as the capital of the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) dynasty. During the reigns of Maharaja Prabhakaravardhana and Emperor Harshavardhana, Thanesar became a principal centre of knowledge, dharma, art, and administration. The archaeological remains recovered here confirm this glorious history.

Archaeological surveys and excavations carried out from time to time in the region between Pehowa and Thanesar have yielded Painted Grey Ware (PGW), Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), ancient bricks, pottery, copper and iron implements, coins, sculptures, and architectural remains. This evidence confirms that this region has been connected with the development of Mahabharata-era and later Vedic civilisation.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Haryana's archaeological research have likewise acknowledged the historical significance of this region. Various studies make clear that human settlement, agriculture, religious activity, and trade routes were exceedingly developed within the region along the bank of the river Saraswati. This is why the region from Pehowa to Thanesar holds particular importance in the study of Indian history.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to visit this entire region on numerous

occasions. Directly observing Pehowa, Thanesar, and the many ancient sites situated between them, I felt that history here lives on not merely in books, but also in temples, ancient mounds, lakes, inscriptions, and local folklore, even today. This is the greatest distinction of this region.

The archaeological region from Pehowa to Thanesar is thus not merely a chain of religious tirthas, but a living archaeological corridor of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, Saraswati civilisation, and ancient history, whose systematic study plays an important role in understanding Indian history more clearly.

Part 2: Inscriptions, Excavations, and Historical Evidence

The region from Pehowa to Thanesar is regarded as exceedingly important for the study of Indian history, archaeology, and culture. The inscriptions, ancient mounds, sculptures, coins, pottery, brick remains, and temple architecture recovered here are proof that this region has remained a centre of continuous human civilisation for thousands of years. Archaeological research makes clear that the development of this land was exceedingly rich not merely on religious grounds, but also from social, economic, and cultural standpoints.

The Pehowa Inscription is regarded as the most important historical evidence of this region. This inscription dates from approximately the 9th century CE and is held to be connected with the reign of the Gurjara-Pratihara emperor Mahendrapala I. It mentions the rulers of that time, land grants, temple

arrangements, tirtha administration, and religious institutions. According to historians, this inscription establishes that, at that time, Prithudak (Pehowa) was a distinguished tirtha and cultural centre of northern India, visited by devotees from various parts of the country.

Numerous important archaeological remains have likewise been recovered at Thanesar (Sthaneshwar). The ancient mounds and excavations here have yielded remains from various periods, including Painted Grey Ware (PGW), Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), red pottery, ancient bricks, copper and iron implements, coins, and specimens of sculpture. These discoveries make clear that this region remained continuously inhabited from the later Vedic period through the early historical era and into the medieval period.

Archaeological research also indicates that the settlements developed along the bank of the river Saraswati were principal centres of agriculture, trade, and religious activity. Owing to the towns and tirthas settled along the riverbank, this region was connected with important cultural routes of northern India. Pilgrims, scholars, traders, and ascetics travelled continuously along this route, further enhancing the cultural richness of this region.

Archaeological material recovered from time to time around Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, and other ancient sites situated in the Thanesar region likewise attests to the historical continuity of this region. Although the religious significance of these sites is well

known, their archaeological evidence is equally important, for it reflects the continuity of the development of ancient Indian civilisation.

Surveys conducted from time to time by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Haryana Department of Archaeology have further established the significance of this region. Numerous sites have been declared protected monuments, and the work of their conservation and scientific study continues without pause. This is helping to keep this invaluable heritage safe for future generations.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to directly study numerous ancient sites, temples, mounds, lakes, and historical regions from Pehowa to Thanesar. During my site inspection, it became clear that every place here is connected with some historical, religious, or cultural tradition. Local folklore, ancient architecture, and the available archaeological evidence, corroborating one another, present a vivid picture of this region's glorious past.

The archaeological region from Pehowa to Thanesar thus establishes that Kurukshetra is not merely a centre of faith, but also an important laboratory for the study of Indian history, Saraswati civilisation, Vedic culture, and ancient urban civilisation.

Part 3: The Research Journey, Conservation, and Conclusion

The region from Pehowa to Thanesar is a living testament to Indian history, archaeology, and Sanatan culture. The inscriptions, ancient mounds, temples, lakes, sculptures, antiquities, and local folklore available here confirm that this region has remained continuously important, from a religious, cultural, and historical standpoint, from the Vedic age to the present day. This is why historians, archaeologists, and researchers from within India and abroad have continued to study this region without interruption.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity, on numerous occasions, to directly study the historical route from Pehowa to Thanesar. On this journey, my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami accompanied me. We visited Prithudak (Pehowa), the bank of the Saraswati, Brahmayoni Tirtha, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, and numerous ancient sites situated along the route. At each site, we studied local traditions, religious beliefs, and the available historical evidence, and made a direct observation of the site.

During this research journey, it became clear that history is not confined to books and inscriptions alone, but remains present, even today, in living form within these tirthas, temples, lakes, and ancient remains. The faith of local people, the traditions of the priests, and the continuity of the tirthas confirm that this

thousands-of-years-old cultural stream continues to flow unbroken to this day.

It was also clearly evident that the Kurukshetra Development Board has made a notable contribution towards the conservation of this historical and religious heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The installation of information boards at numerous tirthas, cleanliness arrangements, the development of tirtha routes, the beautification of lakes, lighting arrangements, and the expansion of basic facilities for devotees are proof that a serious effort is being made to keep ancient heritage safe in accordance with the needs of modern times. On the basis of my direct visits, this work appeared exceedingly commendable.

It is also necessary, from an archaeological standpoint, that continued scientific research be undertaken at the ancient mounds, inscriptions, temples, and other archaeological sites situated from Pehowa to Thanesar. Modern techniques, archaeological excavations, and epigraphic study may bring many new facts about the history of this region to light in future. At the same time, the conservation of this heritage can be made more effective through the participation of local society.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that the region from Pehowa to Thanesar is not merely a pilgrimage route, but a remarkable archaeological region of Indian civilisation, Saraswati culture, Vedic tradition, Mahabharata-era history, and medieval heritage. The evidence available

here confirms that the cultural journey of Kurukshetra has continued without interruption for thousands of years. The conservation of this invaluable heritage, its scientific study, and the conveying of authentic knowledge of it to future generations is our collective responsibility.

Principal References

- The Pehowa Inscription — from the period of the Gurjara-Pratihara emperor Mahendrapala I (approximately 885–910 CE)
- The Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) dynasty — Sthaneshwar (Thanesar) as capital, the reigns of Maharaja Prabhakaravardhana and Emperor Harshavardhana; described in the accounts of Xuanzang and in Banabhatta's Harshacharita
- Surveys of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Haryana Department of Archaeology
- The author's direct visit to the sites and research (2026) — fellow travellers: Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, Bhavesh Swami, Divyanshi Swami

Chapter 24

The Ancient Temples and Religious Architecture of Kurukshetra

Part 1: The Immortal Heritage of Sanatan Faith and Architecture

Kurukshetra is not merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata, or the land where Lord Shri Krishna gave the teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita; it is also an important centre of India's ancient temple tradition and religious architecture. From the Vedic age to the present day, countless temples, shrines, monasteries, hermitages, tirthas, and lakes have developed within this sacred region, keeping the continuity of Sanatan culture alive. These temples have not merely been places of worship; they have also been principal centres of education, dharma, social service, art, and culture.

The history of Kurukshetra's ancient temples is exceedingly old. Although many ancient temples were destroyed, or their form changed, owing to time, natural change, and foreign invasions, the religious tradition of this region never came to an end. Across various periods, kings, saints, social workers, and devotees rebuilt and conserved these temples, keeping this heritage safe to this day.

Among Kurukshetra's principal ancient temples, the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth, Nabhikamal Tirtha, the temples of the Brahma

Sarovar complex, the temples of Sannihit Sarovar, the Shri Krishna-Arjuna temple at Jyotisar, the ancient temples of Pehowa (Prithudak), and numerous Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, and Surya temples situated across the 48-kos region are particularly notable. Each temple is connected with some Puranic, Vedic, or historical event.

Indian temple architecture is not merely a symbol of religious sentiment; it is also a superb example of ancient India's architecture, sculpture, craftsmanship, and scientific knowledge. The shikharas, sanctums, mandapas, pillars, gateways, circumambulatory paths, and sculptural work of these temples reflect the remarkable artistry and technical skill of Indian craftsmen. The architectural style employed in many temples presents fine examples of the North Indian Nagara style.

A further distinction of Kurukshetra's temples is that the Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, and Vedic traditions developed here together. The temples of Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shri Krishna, Mother Durga, the Sun-god, Ganesha, and other deities reflect this region's tradition of religious harmony. It is this very diversity that grants Kurukshetra a distinctive place among India's principal religious and cultural centres.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to directly take darshan of, and study, these ancient temples on numerous occasions. Observing the architectural style, religious traditions, local beliefs, and historical background of the various temples, I felt that each

temple holds within it its own independent history and cultural heritage. Even today, thousands of devotees arrive at these temples for darshan, worship, and religious observances, making clear that their spiritual significance remains unimpaired.

Kurukshetra's ancient temples are thus not merely places of worship; they are an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation, Sanatan culture, ancient architecture, and religious harmony. Their conservation and study is exceedingly necessary for understanding Indian history and culture.

Part 2: The Principal Temples, Their Architectural Features, and Cultural Significance

Kurukshetra's ancient temples are not merely centres of religious faith; they are also superb examples of Indian architecture, sculpture, and cultural history. These temples were built across various periods, and have, from time to time, been restored and rebuilt. This is why a fine confluence of ancient and modern architectural styles is found today in many temples.

The Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple is regarded as one of the most ancient and venerated Shiva temples of Kurukshetra. According to religious tradition, before the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna worshipped Lord Shiva here. The present form of the temple developed in the modern era, but its ancient religious tradition continues without interruption to this day.

The temples and ghats situated around Brahma Sarovar are the religious identity of this region. Worship, aarti, recitation of the Gita, and religious observances are held here every day. On special occasions, thousands of devotees arrive here for bathing and darshan. On a solar eclipse, Gita Jayanti, and other festivals, this region takes on the form of a vast spiritual centre.

The temples situated around Sannihit Sarovar likewise hold particular religious significance. According to Sanatan tradition, bathing, tarpan, and ancestral shraddha performed here on amavasya and other sacred occasions bear special merit. This is why this region remains thronged with devotees throughout the year.

The Shri Krishna-Arjuna Temple and the Akshaya Vat at Jyotisar are an invaluable heritage of Indian spiritual history. This is held to be the very place where Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. The temple complex, the Gita memorial, and the religious atmosphere developed here today keep this historic tradition alive.

Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth, Nabhikamal Tirtha, Pehowa (Prithudak), and other ancient temples situated within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are likewise an integral part of the religious and cultural identity of this region. The traditions of Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, and sun-worship continue to be observed reverently at these temples to this day.

From an architectural standpoint, these temples chiefly display features such as the sanctum sanctorum, the mandapa,

the shikhara, the circumambulatory path, the flag-pillar, and ornate entrance gateways. Although many temples have been rebuilt over time, their original religious tradition and cultural identity remain preserved even today.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to take darshan of, and study, these principal temples on numerous occasions. I made a direct observation of the temples' architectural style, sculptural work, religious traditions, local beliefs, and the faith of devotees. At each temple, it became clear that worship alone does not take place here; the tradition of Indian culture, service, sacrament, and social unity also remains continuously alive.

According to my study, Kurukshetra's ancient temples are symbols of that unbroken tradition of Indian culture which has preserved its spiritual identity despite numerous historical ups and downs. These very temples continue, even today, to draw lakhs of devotees, researchers, and tourists alike.

Part 3: The Research Journey, Conservation, and Conclusion

Kurukshetra's ancient temples are not merely monuments of brick, stone, and craftsmanship; they are a living heritage of Indian Sanatan culture, faith, philosophy, and history. For thousands of years, worship, yajna, aarti, religious observances, and cultural programmes have continued to be held in these temples without interruption. This very

continuity establishes that Kurukshetra is not merely a subject of history, but remains, even today, a centre of living spiritual consciousness.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the good fortune of directly studying these ancient temples on numerous occasions. My wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami accompanied me on this journey as well. We took direct darshan of, and studied, the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth, Nabhikamal Tirtha, Pehowa (Prithudak), and numerous other ancient temples and tirtha sites of the 48-kos region.

At each temple, I had the opportunity to speak with local priests, devotees, and caretakers. I undertook a thorough study of the religious traditions, architectural style, sculptural work, ancient beliefs, and historical background of these temples. It was an exceedingly inspiring experience that, even in the modern era, the sound of Vedic mantras, aarti, devotional singing, and Sanatan traditions remain alive in these temples with the very same devotion as they must have held centuries ago.

One fact draws particular attention during this research journey — that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work in the conservation, development, and beautification of ancient temples and tirtha sites. Information boards have been installed at numerous temples,

tirtha routes have been developed, cleanliness arrangements have been strengthened, and drinking water, lighting, resting facilities, and other necessary amenities have been made available for devotees. On the basis of my direct experience, it may be said that this work has further strengthened Kurukshetra's religious and cultural identity.

However, some ancient temples and smaller religious sites still require greater attention from a conservation standpoint. Owing to the effects of time, natural erosion, and growing urbanisation, the original form of many ancient structures has been affected. It is therefore necessary that the Archaeological Survey of India, the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board, local religious institutions, and society work together on an ongoing basis for the conservation of this invaluable heritage.

As a researcher, it has also been my experience that Kurukshetra's temples are not merely centres of religious faith, but also important sources for the study of Indian history, architecture, archaeology, folk tradition, and social life. Each temple holds within it a distinct historical story, cultural tradition, and spiritual message.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that Kurukshetra's ancient temples are the soul of Indian Sanatan culture. For thousands of years, these temples have conveyed the message of dharma, knowledge, service, culture, and national unity. Their conservation is not the responsibility of government or of any institution alone, but the moral duty of

every Indian. If we keep this great heritage safe, future generations too will continue to draw inspiration from this immortal cultural heritage of Kurukshetra.

Chapter 25

The Fairs, Festivals, and Living Traditions of Kurukshetra

Part 1: A Great Confluence of Faith, Culture, and Folk Life

Kurukshetra is not merely the sacred land of the Mahabharata and the karmabhoomi of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita; it is also a great centre of the living festivals, fairs, and religious traditions of Sanatan culture. Throughout the year, various religious festivals, bathing celebrations, yajnas, recitations of the Gita, gatherings of saints, cultural events, and vast fairs are held here. Devotees, saints, scholars, and tourists arrive in large numbers for these events, from various states of India as well as from abroad.

Ancient texts call Kurukshetra Dharmakshetra and Samantapanchaka. The Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Naradiya Purana, and other texts describe the particular significance of its festivals and tirtha-bathing. It is believed that bathing, charity, chanting, penance, yajna, and worship performed at Kurukshetra on particular dates bestow imperishable merit. This is why the tradition of religious fairs has continued here without interruption for thousands of years.

Kurukshetra's most renowned event is the International Gita Mahotsav. Held every year around Shukla Ekadashi of the month of Margashirsha (Gita Jayanti), this festival has become

a means of carrying the immortal message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, given by Lord Shri Krishna, to the whole world. On this occasion, a Gita yajna, recitation of the Gita, cultural programmes, Vedic observances, gatherings of saints, craft fairs, book exhibitions, and numerous events connected with Indian culture are organised. Thousands of devotees and tourists take part in it, from within India and abroad.

Bathing on the occasion of a solar eclipse likewise holds exceedingly special significance at Kurukshetra. Since ancient times, it has been believed that bathing at Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, and other sacred tirthas at the time of a solar eclipse bestows special spiritual merit. Historical records and travel accounts also record that various kings, saints, and foreign travellers mentioned the vast fairs held at Kurukshetra on these occasions.

Similarly, on occasions such as amavasya, Somvati Amavasya, Gita Jayanti, Shri Krishna Janmashtami, Mahashivratri, Navratri, Makar Sankranti, Kartik Purnima, and Pitru Paksha, large numbers of devotees arrive at Kurukshetra's tirthas. During these festivals, special worship, yajnas, devotional singing, satsang, and religious observances are held in the temples, hermitages, and lakes.

The fairs of Kurukshetra are not merely religious events; they are also living centres of Indian folk culture. Here one finds a vivid glimpse of Haryana's folk arts, folk music, traditional handicrafts, rural culture, Vedic traditions, and Indian cuisine,

in all their diversity. These fairs thus also strengthen social harmony, cultural unity, and national feeling.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that the religious traditions here remain alive today with full devotion and dignity. The faith of devotees arriving at these ancient tirthas, the company of saints, the regular method of worship at the temples, and the active participation of local society establish that Kurukshetra remains, even today, a living centre of Sanatan culture.

The fairs, festivals, and religious traditions of Kurukshetra are thus not merely celebrations; they are a continuously flowing stream of Indian civilisation, Sanatan culture, and social unity, which serves as a powerful bridge between the past and the present.

Part 2: The Principal Religious Fairs, the Gita Mahotsav, and Cultural Consciousness

The fairs and festivals of Kurukshetra are not merely religious observances; they are living symbols of India's ancient cultural tradition, social unity, and spiritual consciousness. Throughout the year, lakhs of devotees gather here on various occasions. These events display a remarkable confluence of dharma, culture, folk life, education, art, and service.

The International Gita Mahotsav has today become Kurukshetra's greatest cultural and religious identity. Held every year on the occasion of Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi (Gita Jayanti), this festival carries the immortal message of the

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, given by Lord Shri Krishna to Arjuna, to the whole world. On this occasion, a vast Gita yajna, collective recitation of the Gita, gatherings of saints, Vedic chanting, cultural performances, traditional folk dances, classical music, spiritual lectures, book exhibitions, and craft fairs are organised. Representatives, scholars, and tourists from many countries also take part in it, further strengthening Kurukshetra's identity as an international cultural centre.

The significance of bathing during a solar eclipse is likewise exceedingly ancient at Kurukshetra. Lakhs of devotees bathe, give charity, chant, and worship at Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, and other sacred tirthas on the occasion of a solar eclipse. Ancient texts and historical accounts likewise mention the vast religious fairs held at Kurukshetra on the occasion of a solar eclipse. This tradition continues to be observed today with the same devotion and enthusiasm.

Similarly, special religious events are held at the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple during Mahashivratri, at Maa Bhadrakali Devikoop Shaktipeeth during the Chaitra and Sharadiya Navratras, and at Jyotisar and other Krishna temples on Shri Krishna Janmashtami. On the occasions of amavasya, Somvati Amavasya, Kartik Purnima, Makar Sankranti, Ganga Dussehra, and Pitru Paksha too, large numbers of devotees arrive at Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, and Pehowa (Prithudak) for bathing, tarpan, and religious observances.

A distinctive feature of these fairs of Kurukshetra is that they display not merely religious activities, but also Indian folk

culture, in its full dignity. The folk arts, folk songs, traditional attire, handicrafts, rural life, traditional cuisine, and social harmony of Haryana present a beautiful picture at these events. These fairs thus present a superb example of unity in the diversity of Indian culture.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to speak with devotees, sadhus and saints, local residents, and tirtha caretakers arriving at various tirthas. This made it clear that these fairs and festivals have given new energy not merely to religious faith, but also to the local economy, tourism, handicrafts, small trade, and cultural activity. The livelihood of many families is directly or indirectly connected with these religious events.

My study also made clear that the Kurukshetra Development Board plays an important role in the successful organisation of these festivals and fairs. The cleanliness of tirthas, traffic arrangements, security, information centres, lighting arrangements, drinking water, medical assistance, and the proper management of facilities for devotees make these events well organised and successful.

The fairs and festivals of Kurukshetra are thus not merely religious celebrations; they are powerful means of Indian culture, social harmony, spiritual awakening, and national unity. These very living traditions continue to grant Kurukshetra a distinctive place among the world's greatest tirthas.

Part 3: A Direct Research Journey, Living Culture, and Conclusion

The greatest distinction of Kurukshetra is that its religious traditions are not confined to the texts of history alone, but remain, even today, an integral part of popular life. At the very tirthas, lakes, and temples where sages, saints, and devotees performed religious observances thousands of years ago, the sound of Vedic mantras, aarti, yajna, devotional singing, and religious observances continue without interruption to this day. These very living traditions grant Kurukshetra a distinctive place among the world's greatest tirthas.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the good fortune of directly observing and understanding these religious traditions. My wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my grandson, Bhavesh Swami, and Divyanshi Swami accompanied me on many occasions during this journey. We took darshan of Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Pehowa (Prithudak), and numerous other tirthas and temples of the 48-kos region. At each site, the unwavering faith of devotees, the company of saints, religious discipline, and the spirit of service left a deep impression.

During my study, it became clear that the fairs held at Kurukshetra are not merely religious events, but also cultural celebrations that bind society together. Devotees, saints, scholars, students, and tourists arriving here from various states become acquainted with one another's culture,

traditions, and ideas. Kurukshetra thus presents a vivid example of India's spirit of 'unity in diversity'.

It was also clearly evident during my direct visits that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out exceedingly commendable work in the conservation and development of this great heritage. The beautification of tirthas, cleanliness, lighting arrangements, information boards, facilities for pilgrims, parking, drinking water, green development, and the well-organised conduct of religious events show that serious efforts are being made to keep ancient heritage safe in accordance with modern needs. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, this positive change was clearly visible.

Nevertheless, owing to changing lifestyles, growing urbanisation, and modern busyness, some traditional folk customs appear to be gradually diminishing. It is therefore necessary that the new generation be made acquainted with the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of these fairs, festivals, and religious traditions. Schools, universities, research institutions, and social organisations should also play an active role in this direction, so that this invaluable heritage may reach future generations safely.

On the basis of this research, my conclusion is that the fairs, festivals, and living traditions of Kurukshetra are not merely religious events, but the continuously flowing cultural stream of Indian civilisation. These traditions connect us with our roots, strengthen unity and harmony within society, and conserve the eternal values of Sanatan culture. This living

heritage of Kurukshetra is a source of inspiration for the whole of humanity, and its conservation is our shared responsibility.

Principal References

- The Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Naradiya Purana
- Gita Jayanti / the International Gita Mahotsav — Shukla Paksha Ekadashi of Margashirsha (based on the Hindu calendar)
- Kurukshetra Development Board — official event descriptions
- The author's direct visit to the sites and research (2026) — fellow travellers: Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, Bhavesh Swami, Divyanshi Swami

Chapter 26

The Krishna Museum, the Kurukshetra Panorama, and Modern Heritage Conservation

Part 1: History, Culture, and Modern Presentation

Kurukshetra is renowned across the world not merely for its ancient tirthas and religious sites; in the modern era, the Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama & Science Centre, established here, have carried out important work in conveying the history, culture, and spiritual heritage of this sacred land to the new generation in an effective manner. Through modern technology and museum science, these institutions have presented the Mahabharata, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, and the life and message of Lord Shri Krishna in an engaging and research-based form.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The grand building of the Shri Krishna Museum, Kurukshetra — scenes from the Mahabharata engraved at the entrance.

The Krishna Museum was established with the purpose of conserving and promoting the multidimensional personality of Lord Shri Krishna, Mahabharata-era culture, and Indian artistic tradition. Rare sculptures from various periods, paintings, replicas of manuscripts, metal images, wooden works of art, terracotta craftsmanship, coins, and the various forms of Shri Krishna depicted in the folk arts of different states of the country are displayed here. This makes clear that Lord Shri Krishna's personality is not confined to religious

faith alone, but has also been an eternal source of inspiration for Indian literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, and folk culture.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The official information board of the Shri Krishna Museum — the world's only museum devoted to the subject of Shri Krishna, the Mahabharata, and Kurukshetra.

Various episodes from the life of Shri Krishna — his childhood, the lifting of Govardhan, the subduing of the serpent Kaliya, the Rasleela, the events at Mathura and Dwarka, and his role in the Mahabharata — are presented artistically in the museum's galleries. This museum offers researchers, students, and general visitors alike a superb opportunity to understand Indian cultural heritage.

Likewise, the Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre is a superb example of modern technology. Here, the scenes of the Mahabharata War, Lord Shri Krishna's teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna, war strategy, and the social and cultural circumstances of that era are displayed in an exceedingly striking manner through three-dimensional (3D) models, light and sound effects, and modern exhibition techniques. This gives visitors the feeling that they are themselves witnessing the events of the Mahabharata era.

The significance of these institutions is not confined to tourism alone. They also play an important role in the study of Indian history, archaeology, religion, philosophy, and culture. Students, researchers, historians, and tourists arriving from

within India and abroad obtain here the opportunity to understand many dimensions of ancient Indian civilisation.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to directly study the Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama as well. Observing the material preserved at these two institutions, the historical episodes displayed, the artistic presentations, and the scientifically developed exhibition system, I felt that India's ancient cultural heritage can be presented in a striking and authentic form through modern technology as well. This effort is proving exceedingly useful in connecting the young generation, in particular, with its history and culture.

The Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama are thus such important cultural centres of modern India as have carried out commendable work in conveying ancient heritage to the general public through modern presentation.

Part 2: The Principal Galleries, Educational Significance, and Cultural Conservation

The Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama are not merely places of sightseeing; they are important centres of Indian history, religion, culture, and education. The greatest distinction of these institutions is that they convey ancient Indian knowledge and cultural heritage to the general public through modern technology and scientific presentation. This provides students, researchers, devotees, and tourists with a new and striking means of understanding history.

Numerous episodes connected with the life of Lord Shri Krishna are displayed exceedingly beautifully in the various galleries of the Krishna Museum. Here, the childhood pastimes of Bal Krishna, life at Vrindavan, the lifting of Govardhan, the subduing of the serpent Kaliya, the slaying of Kansa, the events at Mathura and Dwarka, and Shri Krishna's role in the Mahabharata are presented through painting, sculpture, metal images, terracotta art, wood carving, and other traditional arts. Images of Shri Krishna made in the artistic styles of various states of India are a particular attraction of this museum.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The 'Ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu' displayed in the museum — a rare work of Tamil Nadu wood-craft (approximately 20th century CE).

Numerous works of art preserved in the museum also show that the personality of Lord Shri Krishna is not confined to religious faith alone; he has also profoundly influenced Indian literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, and folk culture. This is why Shri Krishna is counted among the most extensive and inspiring personalities of Indian culture.

At the Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre, the Mahabharata War and the teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita are presented in a living form through modern technology. Owing to three-dimensional (3D) models, light and sound effects, moving displays, scientific models, and audio-visual techniques, visitors obtain a vivid experience of the events of the Mahabharata era. In particular, the presentation of Lord Shri Krishna's teaching of the Gita to Arjuna, the

strategy of the war, and the social circumstances of that time is exceedingly striking.

The educational significance of these institutions is also considerable. Students from schools, colleges, and universities regularly come here for study visits. This museum is likewise exceedingly useful for researchers connected with history, archaeology, culture, philosophy, fine arts, and religious studies. The material available here provides important assistance in understanding the various dimensions of Indian civilisation.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author within the Shri Krishna Museum complex — a statue depicting the subduing of the serpent Kaliya and a mural of Lord Shri Krishna in the background.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I had the opportunity to undertake a thorough study of the Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama. I carefully observed the displayed works of art, historical descriptions, sculptures, and the scenes of the Mahabharata presented through modern technology. It was an exceedingly inspiring experience that ancient Indian culture can be presented, through modern museum science, in a simple, engaging, and authentic form. This makes the young generation, in particular, more aware of its history and cultural values.

According to my study, these two institutions have established Kurukshetra not merely as a religious tirtha, but also as a national centre of research, education, and cultural awareness. Every person who comes here gains new knowledge of history,

religion, and Indian culture, and experiences pride in their cultural heritage.

Part 3: The Research Journey, Cooperation, Conservation, and Conclusion

My journey to Kurukshetra was not merely a pilgrimage; it was also a research journey. My purpose was to directly study every principal tirtha, historical site, museum, archaeological evidence, and cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, so that this treatise might include not merely information from books, but direct experience as well.

During this research journey, I also had the opportunity to meet officials of the Kurukshetra Development Board. In particular, Shri Upendra Singhal ji (Kurukshetra Development Board) listened to me patiently, with great warmth and a spirit of cooperation. When he learned that I was preparing a detailed work of research on the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, he commended this endeavour and offered every possible assistance.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author and fellow companions of the research journey presenting their books to Shri Upendra Singhal ji (Kurukshetra Development Board).

Shri Upendra Singhal ji made available to me important publications, reference material, official maps in Hindi and English, and other useful documents concerning the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. This material proved exceedingly useful in the factual study for this work of research. He also made clear that, should any further research material or information be

required in future, the Kurukshetra Development Board would offer assistance as far as possible. As a researcher, this cooperation was exceedingly inspiring for me.

It was my particular wish to study and photograph the rare works of art, galleries, and exhibits displayed within the Krishna Museum. Museums generally have set rules regarding photography, but Shri Upendra Singhal ji, understanding my research needs, extended the necessary cooperation for study within the museum. He telephoned Shri Balwan ji, the officer in charge of the Shri Krishna Museum, and gave clear instructions: "Shri Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark has come for research work. He should be provided, as far as possible, with whatever information, material, or assistance he may need during his study."

Following this, Shri Balwan ji too, with exceeding courtesy and a cooperative manner, assisted in the observation of the museum's various galleries. He provided information about the displayed material and helped in observing sites useful from a research standpoint. This warm conduct made my research journey all the more worthwhile.

This experience was, for me, not merely administrative cooperation; it was also proof that, when a researcher works with the purpose of impartial and authentic study, government institutions too extend positive cooperation to their work. Owing to this cooperation, I was able to directly study many facts and make this treatise more authentic.

On the basis of my direct visits, it also became clear that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work in the conservation and development of the tirthas, museums, lakes, temples, and historical sites of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The efforts made towards cleanliness, information boards, modern facilities, guidance, lighting arrangements, a green environment, and the conservation of cultural heritage are truly commendable. This provides considerable convenience to devotees, tourists, and researchers arriving from within India and abroad.

On the basis of this research, my conclusion is that the Krishna Museum and the Kurukshetra Panorama are not merely museums, but powerful centres of knowledge of Indian history, the message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, and Sanatan culture. At the same time, the efforts at conservation and research cooperation being made by the Kurukshetra Development Board are playing an exceedingly important role in carrying this great heritage safely forward to future generations. For the cooperation received during the preparation of this work of research, I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Kurukshetra Development Board, and in particular to Shri Upendra Singhal ji and Shri Gulab Singh ji.

Chapter 27

Kurukshetra University: Modern Research and the Tradition of Knowledge

Part 1: A Researcher's Visit to the University

Kurukshetra is not merely the land of ancient sages, hermitages, and tirthas; in the modern era, it has also become an important centre of research, higher education, and the Indian tradition of knowledge. In this direction, the contribution of Kurukshetra University is exceedingly notable. Established in 1956, this university is today counted among India's leading institutions of teaching and research. High-level research continues without interruption here in the fields of history, archaeology, Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, religious studies, and the social sciences.

While preparing my work of research on the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," I came to feel that the study of books alone is not sufficient. To make research authentic, direct dialogue with universities, libraries, experts, and researchers is also necessary. It was with this very purpose that I had the opportunity to visit Kurukshetra University.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The Honour Board of the Department of History, Kurukshetra University — the list of department chairmen, on which the name of the present chairman, Dr. Dharambir ji (since 13.06.2025), is recorded.

On reaching the university's Department of History, I met with the department chairman. I explained to him the purpose of my research — that I was preparing an extensive work of research based on the history of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, the Saraswati civilisation, the tirthas of the Mahabharata era, archaeological evidence, and Sanatan culture.

Having heard me, he welcomed me with exceeding warmth and respect. He had me sit before him and inquired in detail about my research work. He said that authentic research on so great a subject as Kurukshetra would prove useful for future researchers and for society. He assured me that, as far as possible at the university level, he would try to cooperate with my research work.

On this occasion, I presented him, with reverence, my published books "Swarnaprastha ki Gatha" and "Mahant Bane Maharaja." He looked through both books with interest and commended my work of research and writing. For a writer and researcher, this moment was exceedingly inspiring. Receiving honour for one's research work from a senior academic of a university provides new energy for further work.

This meeting gave me the conviction that, when the purpose of research is impartiality, authenticity, and public welfare, academic institutions too encourage such efforts. Such cooperation between universities and independent researchers is exceedingly necessary for the thorough study of Indian history and culture.

This visit to Kurukshetra University was, for me, not merely a formal meeting, but an important stage of knowledge, research, and inspiration. It further increased my enthusiasm for making this work of research more authentic, balanced, and fact-based.

Part 2: The Department of History, the Research Environment, and Academic Cooperation

The Department of History at Kurukshetra University is regarded as one of the leading research centres of northern India. Continuous research is carried out here on ancient India, Vedic civilisation, Mahabharata-era history, the river Saraswati, archaeology, medieval history, and the cultural heritage of Haryana. Students and researchers from various states of the country come here for higher education and research. The university has thus made an important contribution towards the study and conservation of Indian history.

During my visit to the university, the atmosphere of the Department of History appeared exceedingly tranquil, disciplined, and conducive to research. The department holds numerous dissertations, reference texts, and scholarly studies connected with the subject of history. Observing this, it became clear that the university is not merely a centre for imparting education, but also an important institution for the creation of new knowledge.

During my discussion with the department chairman, I presented the outline of my research in detail. I explained that this treatise is not based on religious faith alone, but that facts are being compiled here on the basis of the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, archaeological evidence, inscriptions, government publications, direct pilgrimage visits, and local traditions. He described this work as commendable from the standpoint of serious research, and said that future researchers too would benefit from such authentic research.

He also said that the most important foundation of research is impartiality, authentic sources, and direct study. This is the greatest strength of any work of research. These thoughts of his inspired me to carry my work forward with even greater care and authenticity.

On this occasion, I presented him, with reverence, my two published books — "Swarnaprastha ki Gatha" and "Mahant Bane Maharaja." Looking through the books, he praised my writing and research work, and encouraged me to continue working on history and culture in this manner in future as well. As an independent researcher, this honour was exceedingly inspiring for me.

In my experience, continuous dialogue between universities and independent researchers is exceedingly necessary. Universities possess academic resources, expertise, and experience in research, while independent researchers often have direct access to field study and local sources. When the

two work together, a more comprehensive and balanced picture of history and culture emerges.

This visit to Kurukshetra University gave new direction to my work of research. The guidance and honour received here gave me the conviction that, if research is carried out with honesty, diligence, and on the basis of authentic sources, it receives honour in the academic world as well.

Kurukshetra University is thus not merely a teaching institution, but an important centre for the conservation, study, and propagation of Indian history, culture, and the Sanatan tradition of knowledge. Its research environment remains an invaluable source of knowledge and inspiration for future generations.

Part 3: Experiences of the Research Journey, Academic Inspiration, and Conclusion

This visit of mine to Kurukshetra University remains one of the most important research journeys of this treatise. My purpose was not merely to pay a formal visit, but, as an independent researcher working on this great subject, to receive guidance from the university's scholars and to make my research more authentic. This journey made it clear to me that Indian universities continue, even today, to play an important role in the conservation of knowledge, research, and culture.

During this research journey, I had the good fortune of meeting Professor (Dr.) Dharambir ji, chairman of the Department of History. When I told him that I was preparing a detailed work

of research on "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," he welcomed me with exceeding warmth and respect. He had me sit before him, listened carefully to the entire outline of my research, and commended this endeavour wholeheartedly.

Dr. Dharambir ji said, "Authentic research on a historical and cultural subject such as Kurukshetra is exceedingly important for society and for future generations. As far as possible, the Department of History will extend every kind of academic cooperation to you." These inspiring words of his were no less than an honour for me, and they gave this work of research new energy.

On this occasion, I presented him, with reverence, my published books "Swarnaprastha ki Gatha" and "Mahant Bane Maharaja." He looked through both books, praised my work of research and writing, and offered his good wishes for my continuing to undertake research on Indian history, Sanatan culture, and the heritage of Kurukshetra in future as well. As an independent researcher, this honour received from the chairman of the university's Department of History will remain one of the unforgettable achievements of my life.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author, Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark, presenting his book 'Mahant Bane Maharaja' to Dr. Dharambir ji at the Department of History, Kurukshetra University, together with Master Jagbir Vaishnav and Dinesh Swami.

In my experience, the quality of any work of research is not enhanced by the study of books alone; it becomes more authentic through the integration of universities, scholars,

libraries, archaeologists, and direct field study. This is why this treatise makes balanced use of all these sources — the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, archaeological evidence, government publications, and my own direct journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

On the basis of this research, my conclusion is that Kurukshetra University is a principal centre, in modern India, for the conservation of Indian history, Saraswati civilisation, Mahabharata studies, and the Sanatan tradition of knowledge. Its academic environment and the cooperation of its scholars are a source of inspiration for researchers. I am heartfully grateful to Professor (Dr.) Dharambir ji, chairman of the Department of History, whose honour, guidance, and encouragement made the journey of this work of research all the more worthwhile.

Chapter 28

The Kurukshetra Development Board: Conservation, Development, and Pilgrimage Management

Part 1: The Guardian of the Heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Kurukshetra is among those sacred lands of India where a remarkable confluence of dharma, history, culture, and faith is to be found. It is not merely the sacred land of the Mahabharata or the birthplace of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, but also an invaluable centre of Vedic civilisation, Saraswati culture, and Sanatan tradition. The conservation, development, and well-ordered management of so vast a cultural and religious heritage is an exceedingly important responsibility. The role of the Kurukshetra Development Board in fulfilling this purpose has been exceedingly notable.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The main office building of the Kurukshetra Development Board and its official information board.

According to the Board's own official information board, the Kurukshetra Development Board was established by the Government of Haryana on 1 August 1968, with the late Bharat Ratna Shri Gulzarilal Nanda ji as its founding chairman. During a visit to Kurukshetra in 1967 by the then Member of Parliament for the Kaithal region, the late Shri Gulzarilal Nanda ji, it became apparent that the condition of the ancient tirthas was exceedingly concerning from a conservation

standpoint, as a result of which this Board was established. The Board's principal purpose was set as the overall development of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra region, the restoration of historical buildings and lakes, and the provision of civic amenities to pilgrims.

The principal purpose of the Kurukshetra Development Board is to conserve, develop, and properly manage the tirthas, temples, lakes, historical sites, religious traditions, and cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The Board has, from time to time, carried out numerous development schemes, as a result of which Kurukshetra has today become a far more well-organised and convenient pilgrimage region for devotees, tourists, and researchers arriving from within India and abroad.

The Board has made an important contribution towards the conservation and beautification of Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Pehowa (Prithudak), and numerous other tirthas of the 48-kos region. Owing to arrangements for cleanliness, drinking water, lighting, green development, information boards, facilities for pilgrims, guidance, parking, and other necessary provisions at these tirthas, devotees today enjoy far greater convenience than before.

The Kurukshetra Development Board is not confined to physical development alone. This institution also plays an important role in the propagation of Sanatan culture through the International Gita Mahotsav, religious and cultural events,

pilgrimages, heritage conservation, publications, and cultural awareness. The booklets, maps, and research material published by the Board prove exceedingly useful for researchers and students.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The official information board of the Kurukshetra Development Board — 'Kurukshetra at a Glance', with details of the Board's formation and objectives.

During the preparation of this work of research on the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I too received the warm cooperation of the Kurukshetra Development Board. The Board's officials understood my research work seriously and made available the necessary information, reference material, and official maps. This proved exceedingly helpful in giving this treatise a more authentic and well-organised form. As an independent researcher, I shall always remember this cooperation.

For my part, I express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all the officials and staff of the Kurukshetra Development Board. In particular, to those officials who did not regard my research work as a merely personal endeavour, but understood it as a humble effort towards the conservation of Sanatan culture and the invaluable heritage of Kurukshetra, and who extended every possible cooperation. Their cooperation has proved exceedingly important in enriching the authenticity and quality of this work of research.

The Kurukshetra Development Board is thus not merely an administrative institution, but a dedicated guardian of the cultural, religious, and historical heritage of the 48-Kos

Kurukshetra. Its work of conservation and development has granted Kurukshetra's glorious identity new standing, not merely nationally, but internationally as well.

Part 2: Development Work, Research Cooperation, and Pilgrimage Arrangements

Over the past several years, the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out numerous important works towards the conservation of the religious, historical, and cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The purpose of this work is not merely to develop pilgrimage sites, but also to conserve their original identity, historical dignity, and religious sanctity for future generations.

The Board has carried out development work at Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Nabhikamal Tirtha, Pehowa (Prithudak), Banganga, Bhishma Kund, Abhimanyupur, the tirthas connected with Karna, and numerous other sites of the 48-kos region. The construction and repair of ghats, the conservation of lakes, the development of roads, signboards, lighting arrangements, drinking water, cleanliness, resting places, gardens, and the expansion of facilities for pilgrims are the principal achievements of this work.

For the convenience of pilgrims, the Kurukshetra Development Board has also made available maps of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, tirtha-introduction booklets, and information on various religious and historical sites. Following

an extensive survey and documentation exercise in 1999, the Board published a book in Hindi titled "48 Kos Kurukshetra Bhumi ki Parikrama," which remains, even today, an important source of authentic information on the tirthas of this region. This provides devotees, tourists, and researchers with considerable convenience in reaching the tirthas and understanding their history.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I received the exceedingly warm cooperation of the Kurukshetra Development Board. In particular, Shri Upendra Singhal ji listened to me with full attention. When he learned that I was preparing a work of research titled "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," he regarded it as serious research work and extended every possible cooperation.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author, Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark, and fellow companions of the research journey, presenting his book 'Mahant Bane Maharaja' to Shri Upendra Singhal ji at the office of the Kurukshetra Development Board.

He made available to me the official book on the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, official maps in Hindi and English, reference material, and other useful information. Not only this, he also telephoned his colleague, Shri Gulab Singh ji, at the Krishna Museum, saying, "Shri Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark has come for research work. Whatever information or assistance he may need should be made available to him, as far as possible." Owing to this warm cooperation, I found it exceedingly convenient to undertake a thorough study of the museum, to

understand the material displayed there, and to obtain the information necessary from a research standpoint.

On the basis of my direct experience, it would be fair to say that the Kurukshetra Development Board is not merely discharging administrative duties, but is also extending positive cooperation to researchers, students, and pilgrims. This is why the historical and religious heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is today being presented, in a more organised form, before the country and the world.

As a researcher, I feel that, if such conservation, research cooperation, and far-sighted management were adopted in every historical and religious region, India's cultural heritage could become even safer and more accessible for future generations.

The Kurukshetra Development Board has thus given new energy to the glorious tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra through development, conservation, research cooperation, and pilgrimage management. This institution is truly working as a dedicated guardian of Sanatan cultural heritage.

Part 3: A Researcher's Experience, Gratitude, and Conclusion

The preparation of this work of research on the 48-Kos Kurukshetra has been, for me, not merely a task of writing, but a long-term spiritual discipline, a research journey, and a humble effort in the service of Sanatan culture. During this work, I visited numerous tirthas, temples, hermitages, lakes,

museums, and historical sites directly. At each site, I felt that Kurukshetra is not merely a memory of history, but remains, even today, a centre of living faith and culture.

Throughout this entire research journey, the cooperation of the Kurukshetra Development Board was exceedingly important for me. In particular, the warmth, simplicity, and scholarly perspective with which the Board's official, Shri Upendra Singhal ji, understood my work of research will always remain memorable. He not only listened seriously to the purpose of my research, but also made available numerous important reference materials, official publications, and maps in Hindi and English connected with the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, which provided important assistance in giving this work of research a more authentic form.

Shri Upendra Singhal ji spoke by telephone with his colleague, Shri Balwan ji, at the Krishna Museum, informed him of my research work, and requested that I be extended the necessary cooperation during my research. Following this, Shri Balwan ji too guided me with exceeding warmth. He assisted me in understanding the museum's various galleries, the displayed material, and facts useful for research, and made available the facilities necessary for study. Such cooperation is exceedingly inspiring for any independent researcher.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author and fellow companions of the research journey at the entrance of the Kurukshetra Development Board office.

On the basis of my direct experience, I can say that the Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out notable work in the conservation of the religious, cultural, and historical heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Wherever I had the opportunity to travel, cleanliness, well-organised tirtha routes, information boards, a green environment, facilities for pilgrims, and serious efforts towards heritage conservation were clearly visible. Owing to this work, devotees, tourists, and researchers arriving from within India and abroad today receive considerable convenience.

As a writer and researcher, I express, on my own behalf, my heartfelt gratitude to the Kurukshetra Development Board, and in particular to Shri Upendra Singhal ji, Shri Balwan ji, and guide Omprakash ji Bairagi, as well as to all the officials and staff of the Board. Without their cooperation, guidance, and goodwill, it would not have been possible to present many aspects of this work of research with such authenticity. I pray to God for their good health, longevity, and continued success in their service.

It is my conviction that, in the years to come, the Kurukshetra Development Board will continue, with this very dedication, to conserve the invaluable heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, and, through modern technology, research, and public participation, will present this great heritage to the world in an even more effective manner.

On the basis of this research, it may be concluded that the Kurukshetra Development Board is not merely an

administrative institution, but a vigilant guardian of the cultural soul of Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra. Its efforts at conservation, development, and research cooperation have given the ancient glorious tradition of Kurukshetra new energy. This institution is playing a historic role in keeping this invaluable heritage of Sanatan culture safe for future generations.

Principal References

- Kurukshetra Development Board — official information board and publications (office, Kurukshetra)
- "48 Kos Kurukshetra Bhumi Ki Parikrama" (Hindi, 1999) — published by the Kurukshetra Development Board
- The author's direct visits and research cooperation (2026) — Shri Upendra Singhal ji and Shri Gulab Singh ji, Kurukshetra Development Board

Section 3

The Pilgrimage and Research of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Direct Study • Historical Evidence • Archaeological Research

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a pilgrimage circuit, but a living journey through India's Vedic, Puranic, historical, and cultural consciousness. This section presents a research-based and authentic account of Kurukshetra's invaluable heritage, on the basis of the author's own direct pilgrimage visits, archaeological study, historical sources, government records, and local traditions.

The purpose of this section is not merely to introduce the tirthas, but to present, in an authentic form, that Sanatan cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra which has, for thousands of years, given direction to Indian civilisation, religion, and spirituality.

"Direct travel, authentic research, and devotion to Sanatan culture — this is the soul of this treatise."

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Retired Honorary Naib Subedar, Indian Army | Historian | Researcher | Author

Chapter 29

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra: The Tradition of Pilgrimage

Part 1: The Great Circumambulation of Sanatan Dharma

The pilgrimage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is regarded as one of India's most ancient and glorious religious journeys. It is not merely a geographical circuit, but a living spiritual journey connected with Vedic culture, Mahabharata-era history, the tradition of the sages, Saraswati civilisation, and the divine message of Lord Shri Krishna. For thousands of years, sadhus, saints, acharyas, scholars, householders, and devotees have circumambulated this sacred land. This tradition continues today, with faith and conviction, without interruption.

Ancient texts — particularly the Mahabharata, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Naradiya Purana, and other Puranas — describe Kurukshetra by the names Dharmakshetra, Brahmakshetra, and Samantapanchaka. According to these texts, this sacred 48-kos land held countless tirthas, lakes, kunds, hermitages, forests, sacrificial sites, and grounds of penance, where gods, sages, and great men performed penance, yajna, and works of dharma.

Traditionally, the distance of one kos is held to be approximately three kilometres. The 48-kos region thus represents an extensive cultural circuit of approximately 140–150 kilometres. At present, this region extends across numerous villages, towns, and pilgrimage sites in the districts

of Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Karnal, Panipat, and Jind in Haryana. Administrative boundaries have changed with time, but the religious concept of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra remains unimpaired within Sanatan tradition to this day.

The purpose of the pilgrimage of Kurukshetra is not merely temple-darshan or bathing. This journey connects the devotee with India's ancient civilisation, Vedic knowledge, the history of the Mahabharata, the memories of the river Saraswati, and the grounds of penance of the sages. Through this journey, the devotee experiences that remarkable confluence of dharma, history, and culture which has, for thousands of years, given direction to India's spiritual consciousness.

Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Nabhikamal Tirtha, Pehowa (Prithudak), Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, the tirthas connected with Karna, ancient hermitages, the seven forests, and numerous other sacred sites are the principal stages of this journey within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Each tirtha has its own distinct history, religious significance, and cultural message.

During the preparation of this work of research, I myself had the good fortune of undertaking a direct journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. I inspected various tirthas, temples, lakes, museums, archaeological sites, and historical places. This direct study made it clear to me that the true identity of Kurukshetra resides not merely in texts, but remains present,

even today, in its living traditions, the faith of devotees, and its conserved heritage.

The pilgrimage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is thus not merely a religious observance, but an unbroken journey through Indian civilisation, Sanatan culture, history, and spiritual consciousness. This journey connects every devotee with their cultural roots and brings them face to face with India's immortal heritage.

Part 2: The Character of the Parikrama, Its Historical Development, and Modern Arrangements

The pilgrimage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is among those ancient religious traditions of India whose foundation lies not in faith alone, but in Vedic literature, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, and a tirtha tradition sustained for centuries. The purpose of this sacred circumambulation is not merely to take darshan of various tirthas, but to directly experience dharma, penance, yajna, knowledge, and Indian cultural heritage.

In ancient times, pilgrims completed this circuit on foot, by bullock cart, or on horseback. The journey continued for many days. Devotees would rest for the night at hermitages, dharamshalas, and temples situated along the route, and would perform religious observances by bathing in lakes, kunds, and sacred rivers. This journey has also been a means of social harmony, religious unity, and cultural exchange.

Over time, extensive changes have come about in transport, communication, and pilgrimage arrangements. At present, owing to roads, railways, and other facilities, devotees can take darshan of numerous tirthas within a short time. Nevertheless, many devotees still attempt, today, to undertake the 48-kos circumambulation in sequence, in keeping with the traditional spirit.

The Kurukshetra Development Board has carried out important work in documenting, mapping, and conserving the 182 principal tirthas of the 48-kos region, in order to give this tradition an organised form. Arrangements such as information boards, guiding signposts, facilities for pilgrims, lighting arrangements, and cleanliness at various tirthas have made this circumambulation more convenient and well organised. Maps and reference material published for researchers and devotees are likewise proving exceedingly useful.

During my research, it became clear that the religious region of the 48-kos tirtha-parikrama and the political extent of the Mahabharata-era kingdom of Kuru were not identical. The extent of the Mahabharata-era kingdom of Kuru is held to have stretched from present-day Haryana onward to Delhi and numerous regions of western Uttar Pradesh, whereas the 48-kos parikrama developed as a distinct religious and pilgrimage tradition. This treatise has therefore attempted to understand these two concepts separately.

During my direct research journey, I came to feel that the journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra remains, even today, not merely a religious observance, but offers a remarkable opportunity to understand Indian history, archaeology, culture, and spirituality together. Each tirtha holds within it a distinct historical and cultural chapter.

The pilgrimage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is thus a powerful bridge between the past and the present. This tradition presents direct proof of the continuity of Indian civilisation, the vitality of Sanatan culture, and the immortal glory of Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra.

Part 3: My Research Journey, Experience, and Conclusion

For the composition of "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," I did not merely study ancient texts; I also personally undertook a direct visit to many of the principal tirthas, lakes, temples, hermitages, museums, and historical sites of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. It is my conviction that the true strength of any work of research lies not in bookish knowledge alone, but in direct study and authentic evidence.

During this research journey, I directly studied Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sannihit Sarovar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Nabhikamal Tirtha, Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Aditya Tirtha (Abhimanyupur), Bhishma Kund, Banganga, the tirthas connected with Karna, Pehowa (Prithudak), the Krishna Museum, and numerous other historical sites of the 48-kos region. At each site, I closely observed its historical

background, religious tradition, architecture, archaeological significance, and present condition.

During this research journey, I also received important information from the Kurukshetra Development Board and from various scholars, mahants, priests, and local informants. Wherever authentic documents, government publications, or archaeological evidence were available, priority was given to them. As far as possible, this treatise gives place only to those facts that rest on authentic sources. Accounts based solely on folklore have been deliberately kept from being presented as history, since the purpose of this treatise is to prepare a research-based and fact-based reference work.

On the basis of my direct experience, it became clear that the 48-Kos Kurukshetra remains, even today, one of India's richest cultural and spiritual heritages. If the remaining ancient sites of this region were also subjected to systematic archaeological survey, scientific study, and conservation, many new facts of Indian history could come to light in future. This region still holds within it vast possibilities for research.

I do not regard this research journey of mine as a personal achievement alone, but as a humble responsibility towards Sanatan culture, Indian history, and future generations. If this treatise proves helpful to researchers, students, historians, pilgrims, and general readers in understanding the true historical and cultural significance of Kurukshetra, this endeavour of mine will have been worthwhile.

As the conclusion of this chapter, it may be said that the pilgrimage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not merely a journey of religious faith, but a living research journey through Indian civilisation, Vedic tradition, Mahabharata-era history, Saraswati culture, and the Sanatan tradition of knowledge. This circumambulation connects us with our cultural roots and inspires us to conserve, study, and enhance our ancient heritage with the very same devotion and responsibility that has kept this heritage safe for thousands of years, down to the present day.

Chapter 30

The 182 Tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra: A Brief Introduction

Every tirtha falling within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra holds its own distinctive religious, historical, and cultural significance. The brief introduction presented here is based on the official tirtha list of the Kurukshetra Development Board, the available ancient texts, and the author's own research and study.

District Kurukshetra (Tirtha Nos. 1–46)

1. Rantuk Yaksha (Beed Pipli) — Yaksha Tirtha

This ancient Yaksha tirtha, regarded as the gateway of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, recalls the ancient boundaries of Dharmakshetra. It is held to have a particular connection with the Yaksha tradition.

2. Maa Bhadrakali Temple (Kurukshetra) — Deva Tirtha

One of Haryana's principal Shaktipeeths. Connected, in Mahabharata tradition, with the Pandavas' prayer for victory, this temple remains, even today, a centre of faith for lakhs of devotees.

3. Sthanvishwar Mahadev Temple (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

Kurukshetra's ancient Shiva temple. It is believed that Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna worshipped Lord Shiva here before the Mahabharata War.

4. Shri Kaleshwar Tirtha (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

This ancient tirtha, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is an important centre of Kurukshetra's Shaiva tradition and holds a distinctive place in local religious life.

5. Nabhikamal Tirtha (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

In Puranic tradition, this is held to be connected with the manifestation of Brahma. From the standpoint of the contemplation of creation, this is an exceedingly important tirtha.

6. Badarpachan Tirtha (Thanesar) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic practice of the sages, this site preserves the memory of the ancient hermitage tradition.

7. Kubera Tirtha (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Kubera, the presiding deity of wealth, this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of prosperity and auspicious wishes.

8. Ram Tirtha (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

This sacred tirtha, connected with the memories of Lord Shri Ram, is reverently worshipped in Sanatan tradition.

9. Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra) — Moksha Tirtha

Kurukshetra's exceedingly sacred lake, where bathing on the occasion of amavasya and a solar eclipse is held to be of particular significance. It is also renowned for ancestral tarpan and shraddha.

10. Brahma Sarovar (Kurukshetra) — Deva Tirtha

Kurukshetra's largest and most renowned tirtha. According to tradition, it was here that Brahma began the work of creation.

11. Banganga Tirtha (Dayalpur) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

According to the Mahabharata, this sacred site, connected with the memory of Arjuna bringing forth a stream of water with his arrow to quench Bhishma Pitamah's thirst, remains a centre of reverence to this day.

12. Bhishma Kund (Narkatari) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with Bhishma Pitamah's bed of arrows, this tirtha is regarded as a living monument to the great episodes of the Mahabharata.

13. Gita Janmasthali (Jyotisar) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

It was here that Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the divine teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. This is the site of the immortal message of dharma, action, and knowledge for the whole world.

14. Saraswati Ghat (Kheri Markanda) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the ancient tradition of the river Saraswati, this site preserves the memories of Vedic civilisation.

15. Tripurari Tirtha (Tigri) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with Lord Shiva's Tripurantaka form, this tirtha is a symbol of the ancient tradition of Shaiva worship.

16. Kulottaran Tirtha (Kirmich) — Moksha Tirtha

According to tradition, bathing, charity, and religious observances here are held to bring about the advancement of one's lineage and the peace of one's ancestors.

17. Aditi Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned as the ground of Devamata Aditi's penance, this tirtha is significant from the standpoints of both Vedic tradition and Mahabharata-era history.

18. Soma Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) — Deva Tirtha

This ancient tirtha, connected with the Moon-god (Soma), represents the tradition of Vedic worship of the gods.

19. Amba Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of the Goddess, this tirtha is regarded as an important centre of the Shakti tradition.

20. Kaushiki Tirtha (Abhimanyupur) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the Kaushiki tradition, this tirtha has been reverently remembered since ancient times for spiritual practice, bathing, and the attainment of merit.

21. Ojas Tirtha (Samshipur) — Deva Tirtha

In Vedic tradition, 'Ojas' is regarded as a symbol of radiance, strength, and spiritual energy. This tirtha is connected with spiritual practice and inner strength.

22. Apaga Tirtha (Dayalpur) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the ancient river Apaga, this tirtha is renowned for bathing, charity, and ancestral tarpan.

23. Karna ka Tila (Mirzapur) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

This site is held to be connected with the memory of Karna, the great and generous warrior of the Mahabharata. The archaeological remains recovered here likewise point to its historical significance.

24. Kamyaka Tirtha (Kamoda) — Deva Tirtha

Among the ancient seven forests described in the Vamana Purana, Kamyaka Vana holds particular significance. This region is held to be connected with the penance and spiritual practice of the sages.

25. Nrisimha Tirtha (Barwa) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Vishnu's Narasimha incarnation, this tirtha is a symbol of the protection of dharma and the destruction of adharma.

26. Baranavati Tirtha (Barna) — Nitya Tirtha

This ancient tirtha holds an important place in regional religious tradition and is listed as a Nitya Tirtha.

27. Bala Sundari Tirtha (Hathira) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Bala Sundari, a form of Mother Shakti, this tirtha is a principal centre of local reverence and devotion.

28. Vishnupad Tirtha (Gharadsi) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Lord Vishnu's footprints, this tirtha is regarded as an important centre of Vaishnava worship.

29. Yama Kund (Bhainsi Majra) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with Dharmaraja Yama, this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of the Sanatan concept of karma, dharma, and liberation.

30. Lomash Tirtha (Lohar Majra) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic tradition of knowledge of Maharishi Lomasha, this site represents the ancient culture of the sages.

31. Bhurishrava Tirtha (Bhaur Saiyadan) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the memory of Bhurishrava, a brave warrior of the Mahabharata, this site is regarded as an important witness to the events of the war.

32. Shalihotra Tirtha (Sarsa) — Yaksha Tirtha

This tirtha holds particular religious significance in ancient tradition and is recorded in the official list as a Yaksha Tirtha.

33. Manipurak Tirtha (Murtazapur) — Nitya Tirtha

This tirtha represents ancient religious faith and the continuing tirtha tradition.

34. Arunaya Tirtha (Arnaya) — Deva Tirtha

Held to be connected with the deity Aruna, this tirtha is an ancient centre of the Vedic tradition of the gods.

35. Prachi Tirtha (Pehowa) — Moksha Tirtha

This tirtha of the Pehowa region has, since ancient times, been connected with shraddha, tarpan, and the tradition of liberation.

36. Saraswati Tirtha (Pehowa) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the Vedic tradition of the river Saraswati, this tirtha is an important centre of ancestral sacrament and religious observance.

37. Brahmayoni Tirtha (Pehowa) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the Puranic tradition of creation and Brahma, this tirtha is a symbol of the ancient philosophy of Sanatan Dharma.

38. Prithudak Tirtha (Pehowa) — Moksha Tirtha

One of India's principal tirthas for ancestral shraddha and tarpan. Its glory is described in numerous ancient texts.

39. Renuka Tirtha (Arnaicha) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with Mother Renuka and the tradition of the sages, this tirtha keeps alive the memory of Indian penance and maternal reverence.

40. Soma Tirtha (Gumthala Garhu) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Somadev, this tirtha represents the continuing tradition of Vedic worship of the gods.

41. Brahma Tirtha (Thanesar) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with Brahma, this tirtha preserves the memory of creation, yajna, and Vedic traditions.

42. Saptasaraswat Tirtha (Mangna) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the Sapta Saraswati tradition and the spiritual practice of the Vedic sages, this tirtha is regarded as exceedingly important.

43. Galava Tirtha (Guldehra) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and tradition of knowledge of Maharishi Galava, this site is an invaluable heritage of the culture of the sages.

44. Shukra Tirtha (Satauda) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Maharishi Shukracharya, this tirtha is a symbol of ancient Indian knowledge and the tradition of ethics.

45. Soma Tirtha (Sainsa) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of the Moon-god, this tirtha is an important centre of Vedic tradition.

46. Trisandhya Tirtha (Sangholi) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of the three sandhyas — morning, midday, and evening — this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of the Vedic tradition of sandhyavandan.

District Kaithal (Tirtha Nos. 47–119)

47. Gyarah Rudri Tirtha (Kaithal) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of the eleven Rudra forms of Lord Shiva, this ancient tirtha is regarded as an important centre of the Shaiva tradition.

48. Vriddhakedar Tirtha (Kaithal) — Graha Tirtha

In ancient religious tradition, this tirtha is held to be connected with spiritual practice and the pacification of planetary influences.

49. Surya Kund (Kaithal) — Graha Tirtha

A principal centre of sun-worship. The tradition of bathing and offering arghya here has continued since ancient times.

50. Budh Kund (Kaithal) — Graha Tirtha

This sacred kund, connected with the pacification of the planet Mercury and the wish for knowledge, holds religious significance.

51. Brihaspati Kund (Kaithal) — Graha Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Brihaspati, the guru of the gods, this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of learning, dharma, and sound judgement.

52. Shukra Kund (Kaithal) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Shukracharya and religious observances, this tirtha is important to devotees.

53. Shani Kund (Devigarh) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned for the worship of Shanidev, this site conveys the message of karma and justice.

54. Navadurga Tirtha (Kalsi) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Mother Durga's nine forms, this Shakti tirtha is a principal centre of local faith.

55. Devi Tirtha (Kalsi) — Deva Tirtha

Carrying forward the ancient tradition of the worship of the Goddess, this tirtha is a sacred place of reverence and devotion.

56. Sarak Tirtha (Pyauda) — Deva Tirtha

This ancient Deva Tirtha is regarded as important because of its religious observances and local traditions.

57. Shuddhaspad Tirtha (Dyodhkhedi) — Nitya Tirtha

A symbol of purity, sanctity, and religious conduct, this tirtha is renowned as a Nitya Tirtha.

58. Anyajanma Tirtha (Kakaut) — Deva Tirtha

This tirtha is held to be connected with self-reflection and spiritual progress.

59. Kukrityanashan Tirtha (Saungal) — Deva Tirtha

Inspiring atonement for sins and good conduct, this tirtha holds a distinctive place in Sanatan tradition.

60. Vamana Tirtha (Saungal) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Vishnu's Vamana incarnation, this tirtha conveys the message of dharma and humility.

61. Shri Tirtha (Jakholi) — Yaksha Tirtha

Connected with the ancient Yaksha tradition, this tirtha is significant from a religious and cultural standpoint.

62. Rasmangal Tirtha (Jakholi) — Yaksha Tirtha

A symbol of auspiciousness, wellbeing, and religious faith, this ancient Yaksha tirtha is established within local tradition.

63. Havya Tirtha (Karora) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of yajna and Vedic oblation, this site is also held to be connected with Mahabharata-era memories.

64. Kavya Tirtha (Sisla) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of ancestral tarpan and Vedic ritual, this tirtha holds particular religious significance.

65. Veer Barbarik Shyam Tirtha (Serhda) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the memory of Barbarik, the great warrior of the Mahabharata, this site is regarded as a symbol of reverence and valour.

66. Chakra Tirtha (Hajwana) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra, this tirtha is a principal centre of Vaishnava faith.

67. Juhomi Tirtha (Barsana) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with sacrificial traditions and Vedic observances, this tirtha is regarded as religiously important.

68. Vishnupad Tirtha (Habri) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Lord Vishnu's footprints, this tirtha is a sacred site of Vaishnava practice.

69. Suryakund (Deeg) — Moksha Tirtha

Renowned for sun-worship, bathing, and meritorious deeds, this tirtha is counted among the liberation-bestowing sites.

70. Kanva Rishi Ashram (Rasina) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the penance, Vedic teaching, and hermitage tradition of Maharishi Kanva, this place is an invaluable heritage of Indian sage-culture.

71. Rinamochan Tirtha (Pundri) — Deva Tirtha

It is believed that reverent bathing, charity, and worship here bring about release from one's debts and sins. This tirtha conveys the message of dharma and the observance of duty.

72. Pundarik Tirtha (Mohana) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the ancient Pundarik region, this tirtha holds an important place in Vaishnava and Vedic traditions, and has been renowned since ancient times for religious observances.

73. Devi Tirtha (Tyontha) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Shakti and the spiritual practice of the sages, this site is a centre of local reverence and ancient religious tradition.

74. Trivishtap Tirtha (Mundri) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

'Trivishtap' is held to mean the heavenly realm. This tirtha is held to be connected with Mahabharata-era religious traditions.

75. Lava-Kusha Tirtha (Giyong) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the memories of Lava and Kusha, sons of Lord Shri Ram, this tirtha is an important symbol of Indian cultural tradition.

76. Yajnasang Tirtha (Faral) — Deva Tirtha

Representing ancient yajna traditions, this tirtha preserves the memory of Vedic culture and the Agnihotra tradition.

77. Phalgu Tirtha (Faral) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned for religious observances and meritorious deeds, this tirtha is an important part of regional religious life.

78. Pavaneshwar Tirtha (Dheradu) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Shiva's Pavaneshwar form, this tirtha is regarded as an ancient heritage of the Shaiva tradition.

79. Dhruva Kund (Sakra) — Moksha Tirtha

Inspired by the memory of Dhruva's unwavering devotion, this tirtha conveys the message of faith, patience, and devotion to God.

80. Alepak Tirtha (Kaul) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance of sages, this tirtha is regarded as an important centre of the Vedic tradition of knowledge.

81. Kulottaran Tirtha (Kaul) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

According to religious belief, meritorious deeds performed here are held to be fruitful for the welfare of one's lineage and the peace of one's ancestors.

82. Kapil Muni Tirtha (Pabnawa) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned by the name of Maharishi Kapila, this tirtha represents the great tradition of Indian philosophy and penance.

83. Gadharatheshwar Tirtha (Barot) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with ancient Shiva-worship and sage-culture, this site is religiously significant.

84. Pavanahrad Tirtha (Kyodak) — Nitya Tirtha

Renowned as a sacred reservoir, this tirtha is regarded as a centre of daily religious observance.

85. Banteshwar Tirtha (Balwanti) — Deva Tirtha

This ancient tirtha, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is a principal centre of local faith.

86. Kotikoot Tirtha (Nauch) — Rishi Tirtha

Renowned as the penance-ground of sages, this site is a symbol of Vedic practice and spiritual life.

87. Vedavati Tirtha (Banpura) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the penance of Vedavati, this tirtha is regarded as an important centre of Sanatan Dharma's tradition of penance, sacrifice, and spiritual practice.

88. Naimish Tirtha (Rasoolpur) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the renowned Naimisharanya, this tirtha reflects the tradition of Vedic study and religious observance.

89. Shrikunj Tirtha (Sivan) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the devotional tradition of Lord Vishnu and Shri Krishna, this tirtha is an important centre of reverence.

90. Matri Tirtha (Sotha) — Nitya Tirtha

A symbol of maternal reverence and family sacrament, this tirtha recalls the supreme place of the mother in Indian culture.

91. Swargadwar Tirtha (Polad) — Nitya Tirtha

In religious tradition, this is held to be a symbol of the attainment of the meritorious realms. Devotees come here for meritorious deeds and remembrance.

92. Sutirtha (Goharakhedi) — Deva Tirtha

This ancient Deva Tirtha is an important centre of religious observance and local reverence.

93. Ikshumati Tirtha (Prabhavat) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the ancient river Ikshumati, this tirtha represents the Vedic tradition of water.

94. Gandharva Tirtha (Gorakhedi) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the Gandharva tradition and the culture of the gods, this tirtha is an important part of India's Puranic heritage.

95. Brahmavart Tirtha (Prabhavat) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Brahma and Vedic contemplation of creation, this tirtha is regarded as a site of ancient religious significance.

96. Arantuk Yaksha (Beharjaksh) — Yaksha Tirtha

Connected with the ancient Yaksha tradition, this tirtha reflects the cultural diversity of Dharmakshetra. The memory of Yaksha worship remains connected with this site to this day.

97. Shringi Rishi Tirtha (Sanghan) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic tradition of knowledge of Maharishi Shringi, this site is regarded as an invaluable heritage of sage-culture.

98. Gobhavan Tirtha (Guhna) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with cow conservation and rural religious life, this tirtha is a symbol of the tradition of cow-service in Sanatan culture.

99. Suryakund (Sajuma) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned for the worship of the Sun-god, this ancient tirtha is an important centre of religious bathing and the offering of arghya.

100. Brahmodumbar Tirtha (Shilakhedi) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the Puranic tradition of Brahma and the udumbar tree, this tirtha is regarded as a sacred site of spiritual practice.

101. Manush Tirtha (Manas) — Deva Tirtha

Conveying the message of dharma, good conduct, and self-welfare in human life, this ancient tirtha is a source of inspiration for devotees.

102. Apaga Tirtha (Gadli) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the ancient river Apaga, this tirtha is renowned for bathing, tarpan, and religious observances.

103. Kapil Muni Tirtha (Kalayat) — Rishi Tirtha

Renowned as the penance-ground of Maharishi Kapila, this site is regarded as an important centre of Indian philosophy and the Sankhya tradition.

104. Mukuteshwar Tirtha (Mator) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with Shiva-worship and the spiritual practice of sages, this tirtha holds an important place in local religious traditions.

105. Shri Tirtha (Mator) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Lord Vishnu and Shri Hari, this tirtha is a centre of reverence and devotion.

106. Khatvangeshwar Tirtha (Khadalwa) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Shiva's Khatvangeshwar form, this ancient tirtha is a heritage of the Shaiva tradition.

107. Varaneshar Tirtha (Sangrauli) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with Mahabharata-era traditions, this tirtha recalls the historical significance of Dharmakshetra.

108. Panchtirthi (Sangrauli) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the combined tradition of five sacred tirthas, this site is regarded as exceedingly important from a religious standpoint.

109. Chyavan Rishi Tirtha (Salimpur Madud) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Ayurvedic tradition of Maharishi Chyavan, this tirtha is a matter of pride for the Indian tradition of sages.

110. Jamadagni Kund (Jajanpur) — Rishi Tirtha

This sacred site, connected with the memory of Maharishi Jamadagni, is regarded as a symbol of Vedic penance and knowledge.

111. Vindusar Tirtha (Bandrana) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with an ancient water tradition and religious bathing, this tirtha is held to be meritorious.

112. Jadbharat Tirtha (Jadaula) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the renunciation, self-knowledge, and spiritual life of Mahatma Jadbharat, this site is exceedingly inspiring.

113. Amarahrad Tirtha (Chandlana) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned as a sacred lake, this tirtha is a centre of religious observance and reverence.

114. Balakhilya Tirtha (Balu) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance of the Balakhilya sages, this site is regarded as an ancient heritage of the Vedic tradition of the sages.

115. Dharma Kund (Pai) — Deva Tirtha

This sacred kund, inspiring dharma, truth, and meritorious deeds, holds particular significance for devotees.

116. Dwadashrashi Tirtha (Myoli) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of Vedic astrology and the calculation of time, this tirtha preserves the memory of Indian knowledge and science.

117. Sarvarogahar Tirtha (Pilni) — Naimittika Tirtha

In tradition, this tirtha is held to be connected with the wish for physical and mental wellbeing.

118. Nirakar Tirtha (Pilni) — Deva Tirtha

A symbol of the worship of the formless, attributeless Brahman, this tirtha is regarded as a centre of spiritual contemplation.

119. Kulottaran Tirtha (Kulataran) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the advancement of one's lineage, the peace of one's ancestors, and the wish for liberation, this tirtha is counted among the principal moksha tirthas of Kaithal district.

District Jind (Tirtha Nos. 120–141)

120. Bhooteshwar Tirtha (Jind) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Shiva's Bhooteshwar form, this ancient tirtha is one of the principal religious sites of Jind district.

121. Ekahansa Tirtha (Ikkas) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with Mahabharata-era traditions, this tirtha is an important part of the historical memories of Dharmakshetra.

122. Ramahrad Tirtha (Ramrai) — Deva Tirtha

This sacred lake, connected with the memories of Lord Shri Ram, is a centre of religious faith.

123. Sannihit Tirtha (Ramrai) — Moksha Tirtha

Renowned for ancestral tarpan, bathing, and religious observances, this tirtha is counted among the liberation-bestowing sites.

124. Govind Kund (Rajpura) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with the memory of Lord Shri Krishna (Govind), this kund is of particular significance to Vaishnava devotees.

125. Pushkar Tirtha / Kapil Yaksha (Ponkri Khedi) — Yaksha Tirtha

Connected with the Yaksha tradition and ancient religious beliefs, this tirtha is historically significant.

126. Soma Tirtha (Pandu Pindara) — Deva Tirtha

Pandu Pindara has, since ancient times, been a renowned religious region. Soma Tirtha is an important centre of Vedic worship of the gods.

127. Varaha Tirtha (Barah Kalan) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Vishnu's Varaha incarnation, this tirtha is a symbol of the incarnation tradition of Sanatan Dharma.

128. Ashwini Kumar Tirtha (Asan) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the Ashwini Kumaras, the physicians of the gods, this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of the wish for health and wellbeing.

129. Jamadagni Tirtha (Jamni) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic tradition of knowledge of Maharishi Jamadagni, this site is a heritage of sage-culture.

130. Yayati Tirtha (Kalwa) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of King Yayati, this tirtha preserves the memories of Indian history and the Puranas.

131. Chausath Yogini Tirtha (Kalawati) — Deva Tirtha

This important centre of the ancient tradition of Shakti worship is also held to be connected with Tantric and Shakta spiritual practice.

132. Panchnad Tirtha / Hatkeshwar Tirtha (Hat) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of five sacred watercourses and the worship of Lord Shiva, this tirtha holds particular significance.

133. Sarpadaman Tirtha (Safidon) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the Naga tradition and Mahabharata-era events, this tirtha is a centre of ancient religious faith.

134. Sarpadadhi Tirtha (Safidon) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with the Naga tradition, this tirtha is an important part of Dharmakshetra's ancient cultural heritage.

135. Vanshmoolak Tirtha (Barsola) — Moksha Tirtha

Connected with ancestral reverence and the wish for the wellbeing of one's lineage, this tirtha is regarded as exceedingly important from a religious standpoint.

136. Kayashodhan Tirtha (Kasuhan) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the sense of spiritual and physical purification, this tirtha reflects the Sanatan philosophy of life.

137. Ramsar Tirtha (Kuchrana Kalan) — Nitya Tirtha

Renowned as an ancient lake, this site is a centre of religious bathing and worship.

138. Lokoddhar Tirtha (Lodhar) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the spirit of public welfare and the propagation of dharma, this tirtha reflects the great heritage of the sage tradition.

139. Mallikeshwar Tirtha (Dhatrath) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Shiva's Mallikeshwar form, this ancient tirtha is a principal centre of local reverence.

140. Soham Tirtha (Sahanpur) — Rishi Tirtha

Inspired by the great Vedic dictum 'So'ham', this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of self-knowledge and spiritual practice.

141. Parashar Tirtha (Pajukalan) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic tradition of Maharishi Parashar, this site is a matter of pride for Indian sage-culture.

District Panipat (Tirtha No. 142)

142. Machkuk Yaksha (Seenk) — Yaksha Tirtha

This is the only tirtha of Panipat district in the official list of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Connected with the Yaksha tradition, this site shows that the cultural boundary of Dharmakshetra has been far more extensive than present administrative boundaries. This tirtha is an important symbol of the historical and cultural unity of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra.

District Karnal (Tirtha Nos. 143–182)

143. Mishrak Tirtha (Nissing) — Rishi Tirtha

Renowned as the penance-ground of ancient sages, this tirtha is regarded as an important centre of Vedic study, yajna, and spiritual practice.

144. Dasharatha / Raghavendra Tirtha (Aungad) — Nitya Tirtha

This tirtha is held to be connected with the memories of propriety, adherence to dharma, and statecraft, and is a principal centre of local religious faith.

145. Daksheshwar Tirtha (Dachar) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Lord Shiva's Daksheshwar form, this ancient tirtha is an important site of the Shaiva tradition.

146. Gautam Rishi / Gavendra Tirtha (Gondar) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance and Vedic tradition of knowledge of Maharishi Gautama, this site is an invaluable heritage of Indian sage-culture.

147. Jamadagni Kund (Jalmana) — Rishi Tirtha

This kund, renowned by the name of Maharishi Jamadagni, is regarded as a symbol of penance, sacrifice, and Vedic tradition.

148. Panchdev Tirtha (Padha) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of five principal deities, this tirtha reflects the harmonising tradition of Sanatan Dharma.

149. Koti Tirtha (Kurlan) — Nitya Tirtha

It is a religious belief that bathing and charity performed here are held to bear the same merit as many tirthas combined.

150. Dashashwamedh Tirtha (Salwan) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the Vedic yajna tradition, this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of the historical tradition of the Ashvamedha yajna.

151. Brahma Tirtha (Risalwa) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Brahma and the contemplation of creation, this tirtha is religiously significant.

152. Phalgu Tirtha (Faphdana) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the spiritual practice of sages and the Vedic way of life, this tirtha reflects ancient spiritual tradition.

153. Dhanakshetra Tirtha (Asandh) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with righteous prosperity, diligence, and the spirit of public welfare, this ancient tirtha is a centre of local reverence.

154. Jarasandh ka Tila (Asandh) — Mahabharata-associated Tirtha

Connected with Mahabharata-era traditions, this historical site is also regarded as exceedingly important from an archaeological standpoint. The Asandh region is renowned for its ancient remains.

155. Jambunad Tirtha (Jabala) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with an ancient watercourse and the tradition of religious bathing, this tirtha is regarded as sacred by devotees.

156. Pavan Tirtha (Uplana) — Nitya Tirtha

True to its name, this tirtha inspires self-purification, merit, and a religious life.

157. Chuchukarandav Tirtha (Chorkarsa) — Nitya Tirtha

This ancient tirtha is an important centre of local religious traditions and Sanatan faith.

158. Trigunanand Tirtha (Guniyana) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the memory of the spiritual exposition of the three gunas — sattva, rajas, and tamas — this tirtha is regarded as a symbol of Vedic philosophy.

159. Vyasa-sthali (Bastali) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance of Maharishi Ved Vyasa and the tradition of the Mahabharata, this site is exceedingly important from the standpoint of Indian history and literature.

160. Prithvi Tirtha (Balu) — Nitya Tirtha

Conveying the message of reverence for Mother Earth, the conservation of nature, and the foundation of life, this ancient tirtha holds particular significance.

161. Parashar Tirtha (Bahlolpur) — Rishi Tirtha

Connected with the penance, Vedic knowledge, and tradition of Maharishi Parashar, this site is a centre of reverence.

162. Vimalsar Tirtha (Sagga) — Deva Tirtha

Renowned as a sacred lake, this tirtha is known for religious bathing, worship, and spiritual peace.

163. Vedavati Tirtha (Sitamai) — Deva Tirtha

This tirtha is held to be connected with the penance of the goddess Vedavati and Vedic tradition. This region remains, even today, an important centre of reverence and spiritual faith.

164. Kaushiki Tirtha (Koyar) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the ancient Kaushiki tradition, this tirtha is renowned for religious observances and meritorious bathing.

165. Sudin and Narvada Tirtha (Onkar ka Kheda) — Nitya Tirtha

This tirtha is regarded as a symbol of auspicious deeds, a religious life, and the water tradition, and holds particular esteem among local devotees.

166. Aahan Tirtha (Nigdu) — Nitya Tirtha

Described in Sanatan religious tradition, this tirtha is regarded as a centre of spiritual practice and meritorious deeds.

167. Prokshani / Pranita Tirtha (Patanpuri) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the tradition of the sacred water used in Vedic yajnas, this tirtha is a symbol of purification and sacrament.

168. Brahma Tirtha (Sawant) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of Brahma and the contemplation of creation, this ancient tirtha holds religious importance.

169. Jyeshthashram Tirtha (Bodshyam) — Deva Tirtha

Preserving the memory of the sages' hermitages and penance, this site reflects the ancient hermitage culture.

170. Koti Tirtha (Bodshyam) — Deva Tirtha

According to religious belief, the merit of this tirtha is held to be as fruitful as that of many tirthas combined.

171. Surya Tirtha (Bodshyam) — Deva Tirtha

This principal centre of the worship of the Sun-god is a symbol of the continuity of the Vedic sun tradition.

172. Vishnupad / Vamanak Tirtha (Bodshyam) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the memories of Lord Vishnu and the Vamana incarnation, this tirtha is an important site of Vaishnava tradition.

173. Soma Tirtha (Samana Bahu) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the worship of the Moon-god (Soma), this tirtha represents the Vedic tradition of the gods.

174. Anjani Tirtha (Anjanthali) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with the memory of Mother Anjani, this tirtha is also reverently connected with the tradition of Lord Hanuman.

175. Akshayavat Tirtha (Badthal) — Nitya Tirtha

The Akshayavat is regarded, in Sanatan Dharma, as a symbol of immortality, continuity, and spiritual constancy.

176. Yayati Tirtha (Raisan) — Nitya Tirtha

Connected with the memories of King Yayati, this tirtha is an important part of ancient Indian history and Puranic tradition.

177. Arogya Tirtha (Baras) — Naimittika Tirtha

According to religious belief, this tirtha is held to be connected with the wish for health and wellbeing.

178. Manojava Tirtha (Baras) — Naimittika Tirtha

This tirtha is regarded as a symbol of mental strength, enthusiasm, and spiritual progress.

179. Dundiraj Tirtha (Saukda) — Deva Tirtha

Connected with Shri Ganesha's Dundiraj form, this tirtha is a symbol of the removal of obstacles and auspicious beginnings.

180. Shakumbari Devi Tirtha (Alawala) — Deva Tirtha

Dedicated to Mother Shakumbari, this Shakti site is a principal centre of devotion to the Goddess and popular faith.

181. Kulottaran Tirtha (Karsa Dod) — Deva Tirtha

This tirtha represents the ancient tradition of the wellbeing of one's lineage, remembrance of one's ancestors, and religious observance.

182. Ramsharan Tirtha (Hathlana) — Moksha Tirtha

The final tirtha of the official list of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Connected with taking refuge in Lord Shri Ram, devotion to dharma, and the aspiration for liberation, this tirtha is regarded as the inspiring concluding point of this divine tirtha-parikrama.

Epilogue

The 182 tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are not merely places of worship; they are living evidence of India's Vedic civilisation, Mahabharata-era history, the tradition of the sages, the culture of yajna, and the Sanatan philosophy of life. The conservation of these tirthas is not merely a religious duty, but also an important task in the conservation of our cultural and historical heritage.

The purpose of the brief introduction presented in this work of research is to give readers, researchers, and pilgrims an

authentic and organised introduction to all these tirthas. Detailed study of each tirtha would require separate research.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Kurukshetra Development Board, which has carried out the commendable work of conserving this great cultural heritage through the systematic survey, documentation, and mapping of the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. The information, maps, and published material made available by the Board during the research for this treatise proved exceedingly useful.

Chapter 31

The Annual Fairs and Religious Observances of the Principal Tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Part 1: The Living Tradition of the Tirtha Fairs

The distinction of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra is not confined to its 182 tirthas alone; the fairs, festivals, and religious observances held at these tirthas throughout the year likewise bear witness to the living cultural tradition of this sacred land. On the various dates of the Hindu calendar — amavasya, the full moon, eclipses, and major festivals — vast gatherings of devotees assemble at particular tirthas. This list of fairs, compiled and published by the Kurukshetra Development Board, is proof that the tirtha tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra remains alive today, without interruption, in accordance with the religious calendar.

The table below presents the principal dates and festivals of the Hindu calendar, together with the sites of the fairs held on them. This list is based on the official publication of the Kurukshetra Development Board.

Fair / Festival — Fair Site

Fair / Festival	Fair Site(s)
Vasant Navratri	Bhadrakali Temple – Kurukshetra; Bala Sundari Tem Shakumbari Devi Tirtha – Alawala (Karnal)

Fair / Festival	**Fair Site(s)**
Chaitra Krishna Saptami	Shuddhaspad Tirtha – Pyauda (Kaithal)
Chaitra Amavasya	Surya Kund – Kaithal
Chaitra Shukla Ashtami	Nav Durga Tirtha – Devigarh (Kaithal)
Chaitra Shukla Navami	Shri Tirtha – Kasan (Kaithal)
Chaitra Shukla Dashami	Pundarik Tirtha – Pundri (Kaithal)
Baisakhi	Banganga Tirtha – Dayalpur; Sapta Saraswat Tirtha -
Chaitra Shukla Chaturdashi	Bala Sundari Temple – Hathira (Kurukshetra); Shaku Manojava Tirtha – Baras (Karnal)
Sunday Shukla Saptami	Kamyaka Tirtha – Kamoda (Kurukshetra)
Narasimha Jayanti	Nrisimha Tirtha – Barwa (Kurukshetra)
Vaishakh Purnima	Ramahrad Tirtha – Ramrai (Jind)
Jyeshtha Amavasya	Shani Kund – Kaithal
Jyeshtha Purnima	Rasmangal Tirtha – Jakholi (Kaithal)
Ashadh Shukla Dwadashi	Varaha Tirtha – Barah Kalan (Jind)
Shravan Ashtami	Gandharva Tirtha – Goharan Khedi (Kaithal)
Shravan Shivratri	Arunaya Tirtha – Pehowa; Sthanvishwar Mahadev Te Temple (Kurukshetra); Shri Tirtha – Kasan; Khatvan

Fair / Festival	**Fair Site(s)**
	Vindusar Tirtha – Bandrana; Gyarah Rudri Tirtha – K Kulottaran Tirtha – Karsa Dod; Gautam Rishi Tirtha -
Shravan Purnamasi	Kapil Muni Tirtha – Kalayat; Lava-Kusha Tirtha – Mu (Kaithal); Ramahrad Tirtha – Ramrai (Jind)
Shri Krishna Janmashtami	Nabhikamal Tirtha (Kurukshetra); Pavanahrad Tirth Rasina (Kaithal); Machkuk Yaksha – Seenk (Panipat) Kulottaran Tirtha – Karsa Dod (Karnal)
Bhadrapad Krishna Chaturdashi	Apaga Tirtha – Gadli (Kaithal)
Bhadrapad Shukla Shashthi	Aditi Tirtha – Abhimanyupur (Kurukshetra); Chyava (Kaithal)
Vamana Dwadashi	Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra)
Ashwin Shukla Dashami	Kanva Rishi Ashram – Deeg (Kaithal); Chausath Yogi
Ashwin Shukla Chaturdashi	Bala Sundari Temple – Hathira (Kurukshetra); Shaku Manojava Tirtha – Baras (Karnal)
Kartik Amavasya	Prithvi Tirtha – Balu (Karnal); Banteshwar Tirtha – B
Solar Eclipse	Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra); Sa
Kartik Puja	Brahma Sarovar, Kurukshetra
Kartik Purnima	Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra); Ra Kund – Rajpura (Jind); Kapil Muni Tirtha – Kalayat; C Shuddhaspad Tirtha – Pyauda (Kaithal)

Fair / Festival	Fair Site(s)
Gita Jayanti	Brahma Sarovar (Kurukshetra)
Saraswati Mahotsav	Saraswati Tirtha – Pehowa
Moksha Dwadashi	Shri Tirtha – Kasan; Shri Tirtha – Mator; Dharma Kur
Phalgun Shivratri	Arunaya Tirtha – Arnaya; Tripurari Tirtha – Tigri; Stl Thanesar; Kaleshwar Mahadev Temple – Thanesar (I Jind; Shri Tirtha – Kasan; Khatvangeshwar Tirtha – K Bandrana; Gyarah Rudri Tirtha – Kaithal; Brihaspati – Gondar; Kulottaran Tirtha – Karsa Dod (Karnal)
Somavati Amavasya	Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar (Kurukshetra); So Lokoddhar Tirtha – Lodhar (Jind); Machkuk Yaksha - Habri; Rasmangal Tirtha – Jakholi (Kaithal); Phalgu T
Phalgun Shukla Ekadashi	Veer Barbarik Shyam Tirtha – Sisla (Kaithal)
Phalgun Shukla Dwadashi	Varaha Tirtha – Barah Kalan (Jind)
Holi	Vimalsar Tirtha – Sagga (Karnal)
Chaitra Chaudas	Saraswati Tirtha – Pehowa; Sannihit Sarovar (Kuruk

Part 2: Kurukshetra's Ashtakosi Parikrama

Within the tirtha tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, the 'Ashtakosi Parikrama' holds particular significance. This is a shorter, but exceedingly sacred, circumambulation, connecting the tirthas within Kurukshetra town and its

immediate vicinity. This parikrama begins at Nabhikamal Tirtha and concludes there once again, offering darshan of numerous historical and religious sites along the way.

The route of the parikrama is as follows: beginning at Nabhikamal Tirtha, it proceeds via Ojas Ghat (Kartikeya Temple), the Sthanvishwar Mahadev Temple, Kubera Tirtha, Kshir Sagar, Dadhichi Kund, Saraswati Ghat (Kheri Markanda), Rantuk Yaksha (Beed Pipli), Vriddha Kanya, Vishram Ghat, Oghatiya Ghat/Pavan Tirtha (Sundarpur), the Shiva Temple (Palwal), Banganga Tirtha (Dayalpur), Apaga Tirtha (Dayalpur), and Bhishma Kund (Narkatari), returning once again to Ojas Ghat (Kartikeya Temple), and finally concluding at Nabhikamal Tirtha.

This parikrama shows that the pilgrimage of Kurukshetra is not confined to the vast 48-kos region alone; a compact and well-organised pilgrimage route exists within the town itself, which devotees can complete within a short time.

Part 3: Conclusion

A study of these fairs and religious observances makes clear that the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra are not merely static religious monuments; each tirtha has its own living calendar, according to which the tradition of devotion, bathing, charity, tarpan, and collective worship continues throughout the year. The crowds of devotees that gather at various tirthas on occasions such as Shivratri, amavasya, the full moon, an eclipse, Gita Jayanti, and Navratri establish that the Vedic and

Mahabharata-era tradition remains as alive today as it must have been millennia ago.

I express my gratitude to the official publication of the Kurukshetra Development Board for this valuable list of fairs and the description of the Ashtakosi Parikrama, which provided this chapter with an authentic source.

Principal References

• Kurukshetra Development Board — "The Fairs and Festivals of the Tirthas Situated within the Land of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra" (official publication)

• The author's direct study and document verification (2026)

Chapter 32

Vedavati Tirtha and the Ancient Sitamai Temple (Karnal)

Part 1: A Ramayana-Era Tirtha of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra

Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple, situated within the sacred circuit of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, form an exceedingly important religious and historical tirtha located in the village of Sitamai, Karnal district. This tirtha lies approximately 25 kilometres from the town of Karnal, on the Pehowa road. This site is connected with Ramayana tradition, the penance of the goddess Vedavati, the life of Mother Sita, and the popular belief in her merging into the earth. The official tirtha list of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra likewise includes "Vedavati, Sitamai" as a recognised tirtha.

According to Puranic tradition, Vedavati was the daughter of King Kushadhwaj, who was performing rigorous penance to obtain Lord Vishnu as her husband. During this time, a demon named Shumbha slew her father, and her mother, overcome with grief, entered the fire. Thereafter, Ravana, wandering through the forest, beheld Vedavati absorbed in penance, and, insulting her, spoke ill of Lord Vishnu. Filled with self-reproach at this insult, Vedavati gave up her body in yogic fire, resolving that, in her next birth, she would become the cause of Ravana's destruction. In the Treta Yuga, that same Vedavati was born as Mother Sita, daughter of King Janaka. This story is clearly

recorded in the Uttarakanda of the Valmiki Ramayana (17/38) —

"eṣā vedavatī nāma pūrvam āsīt kṛte yuge.
tretā-yugam anuprāpya vadhārthaṁ tasya rakṣasaḥ.
utpannā maithila-kule janakasya mahātmanaḥ.."

On account of this, the tirtha of Sitamai is regarded as a sacred confluence of the memory of two forms alike — Vedavati and Sita. This tradition is also described in detail in the Vamana Purana, as well as in local religious belief.

According to local folklore, this is the very place where Mother Sita, having proven her purity, prayed to Mother Earth and merged into the earth's embrace. It is on account of this very belief that this place is exceedingly venerated by devotees, and is also called "the sole temple of Mother Sita in the whole of India." The Government of Haryana and the district administration likewise recognise it as a principal tirtha connected with Mother Sita. The Vamana Purana (37/13), describing the mahatmya of this tirtha, states that a person who bathes at this tirtha obtains the merit of a kanya-yajna, and, freed from all sin, attains the supreme state —

"tasyās tīrthe naraḥ snātvā kanyā-yajña-phalaṁ labhet.
vimuktaḥ kalmaṣaiḥ sarvaiḥ prāpnoti paramaṁ padam.."

A distinctive feature of the Sitamai Temple is its ancient brick architecture. The artistic carving found on the temple's walls and bricks reveals its antiquity. The construction of the moulded bricks in the lower portion of the temple site bears striking resemblance to the ancient temple at Kalayat, Kaithal

district, on the basis of which scholars estimate that this temple too must have been built around the 7th–8th century CE. To the west of the temple lies the Vedavati Sarovar, called "Vedeshwar", where bathing on Kartik Purnima, Ram Navami of the month of Chaitra, and Ashtami of the month of Phalgun is held to be of particular significance. The lake, ancient trees, and religious structures situated within the temple complex further enhance its spiritual dignity.

This temple is exceedingly important from a religious standpoint for a further reason. According to local tradition, it is an ancient seat of the Vaishnava Bairagis (Digambar Akhara) of the Shri Ramanandacharya Sampradaya. According to folklore, in Vikram Samvat 1545, Mahant Shri Kishan Das Bairagi came here from the Galta Gaddi at Jaipur, and inaugurated the tradition of regular worship, service, and the guru-disciple lineage at the temple. After him, numerous mahants carried this tradition steadily forward.

According to Local Temple Tradition, the Order of Mahants is Remembered as Follows —

1. Mahant Shri Kishan Das Bairagi
2. Mahant Shri Khildas Bairagi
3. Mahant Shri Bhishma Das Bairagi
4. Mahant Shri Raghunandan Das Bairagi
5. Mahant Shri Ranchhod Das Bairagi
6. Mahant Shri Manohar Das Bairagi
7. Mahant Shri Lakshman Das Bairagi
8. Mahant Shri Ayodhya Das Bairagi
9. Mahant Shri Nahri Das Bairagi

10. Mahant Shri Sitaram Das Bairagi
11. Mahant Shri Tikam Das Bairagi
12. Mahant Shri Lal Das Bairagi
13. Mahant Shri Bhagwan Das Bairagi
14. Mahant Shri Premdas Bairagi (disciple)
15. Mahant Shri Baseswar Das Bairagi

This guru-disciple lineage offers an introduction to the religious continuity of this tirtha, and to the living heritage of the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The marble statue of Mahant Shri Premdas Bairagi — within the ancient Sitamai Temple complex.

Within this lineage of mahants, the place of Mahant Shri Premdas Bairagi is particularly notable. He was born in the village of Dayalpur (Kurukshetra) — the very village where Banganga Tirtha and Bhishma Kund are situated, and whose Vaishnava Bairagi lineage has already been described in detail in Chapter 16 of this treatise. Mahant Premdas Bairagi came to Sitamai in 1930 and was appointed mahant here. During his tenure, Vedavati Tirtha and the Sitamai Temple underwent notable development. He also donated one acre of land to the Vaishnava Bairagi community on Pehowa Road, Kurukshetra, where another statue of his stands installed to this day. In his memory, his birth anniversary is celebrated every year on 13 May at the Vairagi Dharamshala, Kurukshetra, on which occasion grain is collected from various villages of the Bairagi community, to be used throughout the year in the dharamshala's communal kitchen (bhandara). Mahant Premdas Bairagi is thus a living historical bridge between the

lineage of Dayalpur (Chapter 16) and the mahant-tradition of Sitamai (Chapter 32).

Part 2: The Ancient Sitamai Temple, the Tradition of Mahants, and Its Present Form

The ancient Sitamai Temple, situated near Vedavati Tirtha, is an exceedingly important religious centre of the tirtha tradition of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. This temple is counted among the rare ancient temples of India dedicated to Mother Sita. According to local tradition, folklore, and the records of the Government of Haryana, this is held to be the very sacred site where Mother Sita invoked Mother Earth and entered the ground. It is for this reason that this place is renowned by both names — "Sitamai" and "Vedavati Tirtha."

The present structure of the temple is built of ancient bricks. The particular kind of ornamented bricks used in its walls and foundation display the excellence of the architecture of that era. The vast sacred kund situated within the temple complex is a particular object of devotees' faith. Religious belief holds that bathing and taking darshan at this kund bestows merit.

[Photograph in original manuscript] A panoramic view of the Vedavati Kund (Vedeshwar Sarovar) — within the ancient Sitamai Temple complex.

According to religious tradition, this temple is an ancient seat of the Vaishnava Bairagis (Digambar Akhara) of the Jagadguru Shri Ramanandacharya Sampradaya. For the conservation and proper management of the temple, the "Ancient Sitamai Temple Seva Samiti (Registered)" was formed on 19 May 2021,

under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner, Karnal. The purpose of this committee is the conservation of the temple's ancient heritage, the observance of religious traditions, the development of facilities for pilgrims, and the well-ordered management of the temple complex.

Today, Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple are not merely a centre of religious faith, but also an important chapter of the Ramayana-era heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Thousands of devotees arrive here every year for darshan, worship, and bathing in the sacred kund. This tirtha keeps alive, even today, the combined heritage of Vedavati's penance, Mother Sita's chastity, and the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition of saints, all three together.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The official information board of Vedavati Tirtha, Sitamai — with the original verses from the Ramayana's Uttarakanda (17/38) and the Vamana Purana (37/13).

Part 3: Religious Traditions, Fairs, and the Spiritual Significance of the Tirtha

Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple have, since ancient times, been a principal centre of devotion, faith, and penance. Among the tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, this site holds particular significance also because Ramayana-era tradition, the penance of Vedavati, the memory of Mother Sita, and the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition of saints are all found together here. Throughout the year, devotees arrive here from various states of the country for darshan, worship, bathing, and religious observances.

The official tirtha description of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra published by the Kurukshetra Development Board includes Vedavati Tirtha (Sitamai) among the principal tirthas. Large numbers of devotees arrive at this tirtha in particular on Ram Navami, Sita Navami, Navratri, Kartik Purnima, Somvati Amavasya, and other religious occasions. According to the temple's own information board, bathing in the Vedeshwar Sarovar is held to be of the greatest significance in particular on Kartik Purnima, Chaitra Ram Navami, and Phalgun Ashtami. On these festivals, havan, devotional singing, katha, satsang, communal feasting, and collective worship are organised.

The Vedavati Kund situated within the temple complex is the principal attraction of this tirtha. Devotees bathe in this sacred kund and take darshan at the temples of Mother Sita and the goddess Vedavati. Local belief holds that bathing and worshipping here with devotion fulfils one's wishes and brings the blessing of happiness, peace, and prosperity to one's family. Although this is a matter of religious belief, it is this very faith that has kept this tirtha alive for centuries.

This temple, being an ancient seat of the Vaishnava Bairagis (Digambar Akhara) of the Shri Ramanandacharya Sampradaya, is also an important centre of the tradition of saints. Numerous saints and mahatmas have come here over time, and religious discourses, the Shri Ram Katha, the Shrimad Bhagavata Katha, sankirtan, and Vedic observances are regularly organised. This has made this tirtha not merely a temple, but a centre of spiritual and cultural consciousness.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author receiving the blessing of the temple's elderly saint — a living glimpse of the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition of saints.

The author personally visited this tirtha in December 2019, February 2024, and March 2026. During these visits, the temple's religious activities, the Vedavati Kund, the Mother Sita temple, the tradition of saints, and the faith of devotees were closely studied. This direct observation made clear that this tirtha, while keeping its ancient traditions alive, continues to develop steadily alongside modern facilities.

[Photograph in original manuscript] The author taking darshan and offering worship in the sanctum of Mother Sita — the ancient Sitamai Temple.

Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple are thus not merely a religious site, but a living centre of Ramayana tradition, the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition of saints, popular faith, and the cultural heritage of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. These very distinctions grant it a special place among the important tirthas not merely of Haryana, but of the whole of India.

Part 4: Conservation, Development, and the Seva Samiti

Bearing in mind the religious significance of Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple, the Government of Haryana has, from time to time, taken important steps towards its conservation and development. Under the 48-Kos Kurukshetra Tirtha Development Scheme, during the tenure of the then Chief Minister, Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, a sum of

approximately ₹1.30 crore was sanctioned for the beautification and development of basic facilities at this tirtha. Under this scheme, the temple complex, the sacred lake, the bathing ghats, the circumambulatory path, lighting arrangements, beautification, the boundary wall, and facilities for devotees were developed.

With the purpose of properly organising the administration and conservation of the temple, the "Ancient Sitamai Temple Seva Samiti (Registered)" was formed on 19 May 2021, under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner (D.C.), Karnal. This committee was formed in compliance with the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh.

The Office-Bearers and Members at the Time of the Committee's Formation Were as Follows —

1. Chairman — Mahant Raghav Das Shastri
2. President — Mahant Ramswaroop Das Shastri
3. Secretary — Isham Vaishnav Bairagi
4. Treasurer — Sugan Chand Bairagi
5. Member — Mukesh Bairagi
6. Member — Mahant Mahadev Giri
7. Member — Ravindra Bairagi
8. Member — Bajidar Bairagi
9. Member — Darshan
10. Member — Ramphal

The author has not merely undertaken a literary study of this tirtha, but has also directly studied the site in various years. During his visits of December 2019, February 2024, and March 2026, a comparative observation was made of the temple

complex, the Vedavati Kund, the Mother Sita temple, the religious activities, and the development work. These visits made clear that, through government conservation together with the cooperation of the local community of saints and devotees, this tirtha's form has developed considerably.

Part 5: Conclusion and Principal References

Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple are among those rare tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra where the Puranas, Ramayana tradition, folklore, the tradition of saints, and present-day religious faith all appear together. This tirtha is connected not merely with the memories of Mother Sita, but also with the penance of her previous birth as Vedavati and her unbroken devotion to Lord Vishnu. It is for this reason that this site is regarded as an invaluable heritage of Sanatan Dharma's penance, sacrifice, chastity, and devotion to dharma.

This tirtha is also exceedingly important from the standpoint of the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition of saints. The guru-disciple lineage that began with Mahant Shri Kishan Das Bairagi has continuously sustained the spiritual dignity of this tirtha. The presently constituted Ancient Sitamai Temple Seva Samiti (Registered) is actively working towards the conservation and development of the temple, and towards facilities for pilgrims.

Vedavati Tirtha and the ancient Sitamai Temple are thus not merely a heritage of Haryana or the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, but an invaluable tirtha of the Ramayana tradition, the Vaishnava tradition of saints, and Sanatan culture of the whole of India. The conservation, enhancement, and widespread promotion

of this sacred site is our cultural responsibility, so that future generations too may draw inspiration from this glorious heritage.

Principal References

1. Kurukshetra Development Board — 48 Kos Kurukshetra (official tirtha description).

2. District Administration, Karnal — the Sitamai Temple (tourism and historical description).

3. The Valmiki Ramayana, Uttarakanda 17/38 — the Puranic legend of Vedavati (cited on the temple's information board).

4. The Vamana Purana 37/13 — the mahatmya of Vedavati Tirtha (cited on the temple's information board).

5. The Ancient Sitamai Temple Seva Samiti (Registered), Sitamai, Karnal — local records and details of the committee.

6. Oral historical information obtained from the temple's mahants and local tradition.

7. The author's direct pilgrimage visits, site study, and document verification (December 2019, February 2024, and March 2026).

Chapter 33

Narkatari — Bhishma Pitamah's Bed of Arrows and the Tradition of Vaishnava Spiritual Practice

Introduction

Narkatari, situated within the sacred 48-kos tirtha circuit of Kurukshetra, has, since ancient times, been regarded as an exceedingly important religious and historical site. This place is renowned chiefly for Bhishma Kund. It is believed that, during the Mahabharata War, when Bhishma Pitamah, pierced by Arjuna's arrows, lay upon his bed of arrows, Arjuna, to quench his thirst, struck the earth with an arrow, and a stream of water burst forth from it. This very sacred reservoir is reverently worshipped today under the name Bhishma Kund. This tirtha's mention is also connected with the traditions of the Mahabharata and the Vamana Purana.

Narkatari is not merely a monument to the Mahabharata; it remains, even today, a principal centre of devotees' faith. The Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board have included it among the principal tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, and have recognised it as an important stage of the Ashtakosi Parikrama.

Over time, saints and ascetics of various Vaishnava traditions came to this region. According to local tradition, Ramanandi Vaishnava Bairagi saints too have been connected with spiritual practice, devotional singing, and service to the tirtha

here. Narkatari thus also represents a living stream of Vaishnava spiritual practice. A separate study of the available historical evidence in this regard is called for, and it is therefore presented here as local tradition.

Narkatari's natural setting, the cultural memories of the Saraswati region, and the inspiration of Bhishma Pitamah's sacrifice, dharma, and integrity make this place unique. Even today, thousands of devotees come here to bathe, take darshan, and worship, obtaining religious merit.

The Vaishnava Tradition of Saints

The seat of the Vaishnava Bairagi tradition, situated within the sacred tirtha region of Narkatari, has long been a centre of service to saints, the propagation of dharma, and spiritual practice. Devotees who come here take darshan of Bhishma Kund, and also receive the blessing of the saints, finding an opportunity to connect with this ancient tradition. Religious activities have continued to be conducted at this seat in accordance with the guru-disciple tradition.

Editorial note: detailed records concerning the mahant-tradition and lineage of this seat are not yet widely available in published form. Accordingly, the mention of individual names and the order of succession has not been included in this edition. This portion will be expanded and verified in future, on the basis of authentic records, genealogical documents, or inscriptions obtained from the seat.

At present, regular worship, aarti, recitation of the Ramayana, devotional singing, and communal feasts (bhandaras) are conducted at this seat, keeping this place a living centre of faith for devotees and the community of saints alike.

Historical and Cultural Significance

The distinction of Narkatari is that a beautiful confluence of Mahabharata-era history and the Vaishnava tradition of saints is to be found here. On one hand, the memories of Bhishma Pitamah's penance, sacrifice, and devotion to dharma lend glory to this land; on the other, the tradition of devotion, service, and spiritual practice of the Vaishnava Bairagi saints continuously sustains the spiritual dignity of this tirtha. According to Mahabharata tradition, this is held to be the very sacred land where Bhishma Pitamah, while lying upon his bed of arrows, gave his teaching on dharma, ethics, and statecraft.

Even today, devotees arrive at Narkatari from various parts of the country to take reverent darshan at Bhishma Kund and to receive the blessing of the saints at this ancient seat. Within the 48-kos tirtha circuit of Kurukshetra, this site holds particular significance from a religious, cultural, and spiritual standpoint.

The Author's Visit to the Site and Direct Observation

The author too had the good fortune of taking darshan at this sacred tirtha. Direct observation of the site made it clear that Narkatari is not merely a historical monument, but a centre of living faith. The tranquil atmosphere of Bhishma Kund, the religious activities of the temple complex, and the simple life

of the saints evoke a profound spiritual experience in the minds of devotees.

The significance of Narkatari also lies in the fact that the immortal memories of the Mahabharata and the tradition of saints remain alive here together, even today. This tirtha conveys to future generations the message of dharma, sacrifice, service, and the observance of duty. Narkatari Tirtha is thus an important confluence of the immortal memories of Bhishma Pitamah and the Vaishnava tradition of saints, remaining an invaluable chapter of Kurukshetra's spiritual heritage.

Note on illustrations: all photographs presented in the original manuscript at this point were taken by the author himself during his direct visit to Narkatari Tirtha. The formal identification (names, titles) of persons present in group photographs was to be updated upon the author's confirmation.

Chapter 34

Folk Traditions and Historical Examination

The Relationship between Folklore and History

Folklore holds a particular place within India's ancient cultural tradition. Numerous tirthas, temples, lakes, hermitages, and religious sites are connected with popular beliefs that have been passed down orally from generation to generation. This folklore is an important means of preserving society's cultural memory, but it cannot be regarded as the final truth in the writing of history. It is the historian's responsibility to respect folklore while examining it on the basis of the available evidence.

Within the 48-kos region of Kurukshetra too, there are numerous tirthas connected with various pieces of folklore. In one place, an account of a sage's penance is found; in another, the story of a deity's manifestation is recounted; and in yet another, some episode of the Mahabharata is connected with a local site. These stories have, for centuries, kept devotees' faith alive and carried religious traditions forward.

But for a researcher, it is not sufficient that a story merely be in common circulation. The historical reliability of any piece of folklore is assessed on the basis of a comparative study of archaeological evidence, inscriptions, ancient texts, records, government documents, travel accounts, and local traditions.

When various sources corroborate one another, the historical basis of a tradition is regarded as stronger.

During the preparation of this work of research, the author too adopted this very method. At numerous sites, folklore was heard from local mahants, priests, villagers, and devotees. Some of it was supported by inscriptions, government records, or ancient literature, while sufficient evidence has not yet been found in support of some stories. This book therefore presents, as history, only those facts for which some form of evidence is available. Subjects for which no evidence was found have either been mentioned as folklore, or have not been included in the book at all.

History and faith are not mutually opposed. Faith gives society spiritual strength, while history shows the path towards the pursuit of truth. The task of an impartial researcher is to establish a balance between the two, so that popular tradition is neither disrespected, nor unproven stories allowed to take the place of history.

A Comparative Examination of Sources

During his journey through Kurukshetra, the author heard numerous episodes based on local folklore. Some stories matched ancient texts, inscriptions, and government records, while some were current only as local tradition. The impartial examination of each such episode has been a principal purpose of this work of research.

In the writing of history, it is not considered proper to reject a piece of folklore outright, for popular memory often points towards ancient events. On the other hand, a story's mere currency alone does not make it a historical fact either. Historians therefore undertake a comparative study of the available sources. Oral tradition, written texts, inscriptions, copper plates, archaeological remains, coins, government records, and site inspection — all these together are drawn upon in reaching a conclusion.

This very method has been adopted in the writing of this book. The author visited each tirtha and spoke with local mahants, priests, scholars, and villagers. Wherever a piece of folklore was confirmed by an inscription, an information board, ancient literature, or government records, it was given a place in this work of research. Where sufficient evidence was not available, the subject was either mentioned as 'local folklore' or was not included in the book.

For example, during the journey, some traditions were recounted at certain sites for which no ancient record or published research was immediately available in support. The author did not accept these as history without evidence. Similarly, at some sites, the descriptions inscribed on established inscriptions showed considerable correspondence with local tradition and the available historical sources, and these were therefore regarded as more reliable.

The purpose of history is not to refute folklore, but to search for its historical basis. Often, years later, when new

inscriptions, archaeological discoveries, or records become available, previously current folklore too comes to be substantiated. The perspective of an impartial researcher should therefore always remain open, balanced, and evidence-based. Oral traditions can be important sources for history, but it is necessary to test them against other evidence.

In this work of research, the author's endeavour has been to observe, equally, both respect for faith and the authenticity of history. This very method keeps this book from being confined to tirtha description alone, and makes it a balanced and research-based document of Kurukshetra's cultural, religious, and historical heritage.

Research Methodology: Direct Site Survey

In preparing this work of research, rather than relying solely on available books, the author adopted the method of direct field survey. Visiting the tirthas situated within the 48-kos region of Kurukshetra in person, the temples, lakes, ancient remains, inscriptions, information boards, and local religious traditions there were observed. This made it possible to directly verify many of the facts described in the book.

During the research, each tirtha was photographed as far as possible. The photographs taken by the author himself are not merely visual material; they are also proof that the relevant site was directly inspected. The inscriptions and information boards established at numerous sites were studied and compared with the Mahabharata, the Puranas, historical texts, and material published by the Government of Haryana and the

Kurukshetra Development Board. Where correspondence was found among various sources, the facts were regarded as more reliable.

During this research journey, dialogue was also held with numerous mahants, priests, scholars, local residents, and tirtha caretakers. The information they provided was not immediately accepted as historical fact, but was examined against the available documents, published research, and other sources. This is why this book has attempted to present only substantiated facts as history.

Conclusion

History is a continuously evolving subject. New records, inscriptions, archaeological discoveries, and unpublished manuscripts come to light from time to time, which may lead to revisions in previously established views. This treatise should therefore not be regarded as a claim to final truth, but as an impartial and honest work of research undertaken on the basis of the available evidence.

The author's purpose has not been to support or refute any religious belief, but to present Kurukshetra's historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage as authentically as possible. Should new evidence become available in future, it will be welcomed, and the necessary revision and expansion can be made in future editions. This is both the responsibility of a genuine researcher and the scientific tradition of the writing of history.

This work of research has thus been constructed upon five foundations: folklore, faith, direct site survey, the comparative study of historical sources, and evidence-based conclusions. This is its principal distinction, and this is what establishes it as a research-based work, distinct from ordinary tirtha description.

Chapter 35

Kurukshetra Through the Eyes of Travellers, Scholars, and Historians

Ancient Travellers and Early Study

Kurukshetra is among those rare cultural and religious lands of India that have, from ancient times to the modern era, drawn the attention of countless travellers, scholars, historians, and archaeologists. It is not merely the battlefield of the Mahabharata, or the site of Lord Shri Krishna's teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, but also an important centre for the study of Indian civilisation, Vedic culture, and religious traditions. It is for this reason that, across various periods, numerous Indian and foreign scholars have visited Kurukshetra and recorded its distinctive features in their writings.

The Chinese Buddhist traveller Xuanzang, who came to India in ancient times, visited Kurukshetra in the seventh century CE. In his travel account, he describes this region as a rich, religious, and historical land. According to him, numerous temples, lakes, and religious sites existed here, and pilgrims came from far and wide for darshan. His account makes clear that, even by the time of Emperor Harshavardhana, Kurukshetra's religious standing remained exceedingly high. Xuanzang's travel account is counted among the important sources of Indian history.

In the nineteenth century, the British archaeologist Sir Alexander Cunningham likewise surveyed the Kurukshetra region. Studying its ancient sites, mounds, lakes, and historical remains, he indicated that this region was exceedingly important for the study of ancient Indian civilisation. His observations went on to give new direction to Indian archaeological research.

In the modern era, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Kurukshetra University, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Government of Haryana, and numerous independent researchers have likewise undertaken extensive study of this region. On the basis of archaeological excavations, historical records, and literary sources, the work of understanding Kurukshetra's cultural heritage continues without pause. This region remains, even today, akin to a living laboratory for researchers of history, archaeology, religion, philosophy, and culture.

The distinction of Kurukshetra is that faith and history have developed here in parallel. This is why travellers and scholars of various eras have each described this sacred land from their own perspective. A comparative study of all these accounts brings Kurukshetra's historical, religious, and cultural significance into even clearer focus.

Medieval Accounts: Al-Biruni and Abul Fazl

Even after the seventh-century Chinese traveller Xuanzang, numerous scholars and historians mentioned Kurukshetra. The renowned eleventh-century Persian scholar Al-Biruni, in

his celebrated work Kitab-ul-Hind, gives a detailed account of India's religion, philosophy, geography, and pilgrimage traditions. He regarded Kurukshetra as an exceedingly sacred tirtha of Indians, and noted that, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, vast numbers of devotees gathered here for bathing and religious observances. His account makes clear that, even in the medieval period, Kurukshetra's religious standing remained unimpaired.

Abul Fazl, court historian of the Mughal emperor Akbar, likewise mentioned Kurukshetra in his celebrated work, the Ain-i-Akbari. He described this region as a principal tirtha of the Hindus, and gave a particular account of the renown of Brahma Sarovar and the solar eclipse fair. This establishes that, even in the sixteenth century, Kurukshetra was a leading religious centre at the pan-Indian level, visited by devotees from various parts of the country.

During British rule, numerous surveyors, geographers, and archaeologists studied Kurukshetra. In particular, Sir Alexander Cunningham and his colleagues surveyed the ancient mounds, temples, lakes, and historical sites. Their studies made clear that Kurukshetra is exceedingly important not merely as a centre of religious faith, but also from the standpoint of ancient Indian history and archaeology. Later research carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) further strengthened these studies.

In independent India, Kurukshetra University, the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board,

the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and numerous independent researchers have carried out continuous research on the history, archaeology, religion, and culture of this region. Through scientific surveys, excavations, and the comparative study of ancient texts and local traditions, an effort continues to be made to clarify Kurukshetra's historical identity further. Today, Kurukshetra is regarded not merely as a centre of reverence, but also as an international centre for the study of history, archaeology, culture, and religion.

A collective study of the accounts of all these travellers, scholars, and historians establishes that, though ages have changed and ruling powers have changed, the religious, cultural, and historical significance of Kurukshetra has never diminished. From the Vedic age to the present day, this land has held its standing as an invaluable heritage of Indian civilisation.

Modern Research, the Author's Perspective, and Global Recognition

In the modern era, the study of Kurukshetra has not remained confined to a religious perspective alone. Researchers of numerous disciplines — history, archaeology, geography, culture, philosophy, and tourism — have undertaken extensive study of this region. Research carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Kurukshetra University, the Government of Haryana, and the Kurukshetra Development Board has made clear that Kurukshetra is a multidimensional centre of Indian civilisation and cultural

heritage. The archaeological remains, ancient mounds, lakes, temples, and historical records recovered here present evidence of this region's continuously developing cultural tradition.

Kurukshetra also holds a particular identity across the world as the site of Lord Shri Krishna's teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. The Gita has been translated into numerous languages of the world, and, through it, the attention of crores of people has been drawn towards this sacred land. Every year, lakhs of devotees and tourists arrive from within India and abroad to take darshan of Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sannihit Sarovar, and other tirthas of the 48-kos region. The International Gita Mahotsav has likewise given Kurukshetra's global recognition new heights.

The author of this work of research, alongside the study of available literature, also undertook a direct journey through the 48-kos region of Kurukshetra. This treatise has been constructed on the basis of a site survey of numerous tirthas, dialogue with local mahants, priests, and scholars, the study of inscriptions and information boards, and photography undertaken by the author himself. For this reason, the account presented here is not confined to information from books alone, but is an integrated form of direct experience and the available evidence.

A comparative study of the accounts of travellers, scholars, and historians establishes that Kurukshetra is not merely a memory of the past, but remains, even today, a centre of living

faith, culture, and research. From the Vedic sages to modern researchers, every age has acknowledged the significance of this land from its own perspective. It is this very continuity that makes Kurukshetra an invaluable symbol of India's cultural consciousness.

The author holds that a true study of Kurukshetra can be considered complete only when a balanced use is made of all of these — ancient texts, archaeological evidence, historical records, local traditions, and direct site observation. This very research method will prove the most reliable path for future researchers as well.

The travel accounts of travellers, the research of scholars, and the analysis of historians thus together establish that Kurukshetra is a cultural heritage not merely of Haryana, but of the whole of India and the world. Its historical, religious, and philosophical significance will continue to inspire future generations as well.

Chapter 36

Modern Kurukshetra: Changing Character and the Challenges of Conservation

(Fact-verification note: the four parts of this chapter have been reviewed against the official portal of the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board, and other reliable sources. Place names, institutions, and historical descriptions were found to be factually correct; no factual error was found.)

Part 1

Kurukshetra is not merely the land of the Mahabharata War; it is a living centre of India's spiritual, cultural, historical, and archaeological consciousness. This region, described in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, and numerous historical sources, remains, even today, a centre of attraction for crores of devotees, researchers, and tourists. Over time, the character of Kurukshetra has continuously changed. While, on one hand, modern development, roads, universities, museums, religious tourism, and new facilities have increased, on the other hand, the challenges of conserving its ancient form and heritage are becoming increasingly serious as well.

Today's Kurukshetra is not merely a town, but a vast cultural landscape spread across 48 kos. This includes Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Pehowa, Narkatari,

Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Banganga, Bhishma Kund, Abhimanyupur, and numerous other ancient tirthas. Lakhs of devotees arrive at these sites every year. Religious tourism benefits the local economy, but the original identity of many tirthas is being affected by growing crowds, pollution, encroachment, and disorganised development.

In the modern era, the Government of Haryana, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Archaeological Survey of India, and other institutions continue to work towards the conservation and development of the tirthas. The beautification of Brahma Sarovar, the modern Light and Sound programme at Jyotisar, better road connectivity to the tirthas, cleanliness campaigns, and the expansion of tourist facilities are important efforts in this direction. These efforts have established Kurukshetra as a leading religious tourism site not merely nationally, but internationally as well.

But maintaining a balance between development and conservation is the greatest challenge. If modern construction work is carried out in disregard of historical evidence and archaeological sensitivity, future generations may be deprived of the true heritage. It is therefore necessary that the conservation of cultural heritage be given the highest priority in every development scheme.

As a researcher, during my journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that many smaller tirthas still exist, even today, in rural areas, with their ancient identity intact, but there is a lack of adequate information, directional

signboards, historical description, and conservation arrangements concerning them. If scientific survey, documentation, and promotion of these sites were undertaken, the entire tirtha tradition of Kurukshetra could be presented to the world in an even more robust form.

Part 2

Alongside modern development, the greatest challenge facing Kurukshetra is the conservation of its natural and cultural environment. In ancient times, the lakes, rivers, forests, and hermitages here were principal centres of spiritual practice. Today, owing to growing population, urbanisation, industrial activity, and the pressure of tourism, the cleanliness and natural balance of many reservoirs has been affected. In particular, there is a need to work seriously on the regular cleaning of smaller tirtha-lakes, water conservation, and rainwater harvesting.

Encroachment too has emerged as a serious problem. Around many ancient tirthas, unplanned construction, illegal occupation, and growing commercial activity are affecting their original form. In many places, tirtha boundaries are not clearly marked, which could give rise to the danger of historical heritage vanishing in future. It is therefore necessary that the scientific demarcation, digital documentation, and legal protection of every principal and minor tirtha be ensured.

The historical identity of Kurukshetra is not confined to its temples and lakes alone. Its ancient mounds, archaeological remains, inscriptions, folk traditions, and religious festivals

are likewise an integral part of its cultural heritage. If all these elements are not conserved with a comprehensive perspective, important historical evidence may be lost to future researchers.

The expansion of tourism has provided new opportunities for local people's employment and economic development. Hotels, transport, handicrafts, religious goods, and local trade have benefited from it. But it is necessary to take particular care that excessive commercialisation does not affect the spiritual dignity of the tirthas. The purpose of religious tourism should be not merely economic gain, but also the respect and conservation of cultural heritage.

During my journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear that, at those tirthas which have received extensive publicity, facilities are comparatively better; while many historical sites still remain outside the knowledge of the general public. At such places, there are neither adequate information boards, nor is an authentic account of their history available. If a brief introduction to each tirtha's history, its mention in the Puranas, its geographical position, and its archaeological significance were displayed, it would benefit both devotees and researchers.

In today's digital age, the use of modern technology is also necessary for conserving Kurukshetra's heritage. GIS mapping, drone surveys, digital records, three-dimensional (3D) documentation, and online information archives for every tirtha could prove exceedingly useful in future conservation

work. This would also make authentic information available to researchers across the world.

Modern Kurukshetra is thus moving forward in the direction of establishing a balance between development and heritage. What is needed is that development schemes be prepared giving equal importance to all four dimensions — history, culture, environment, and religious faith. Only then can Kurukshetra's invaluable heritage reach future generations safely, with the very same dignity.

Part 3

The conservation of Kurukshetra's cultural and religious heritage is not the responsibility of government alone; it is the shared responsibility of society, religious institutions, educational institutions, researchers, and every citizen. If the work of conservation remains confined to government schemes alone, the protection of so vast a heritage will not be possible. Public participation, awareness, and sustained effort are essential for this.

The Government of Haryana and the Kurukshetra Development Board have, over the past several years, implemented numerous schemes for the development of the tirthas. Road connectivity, lighting arrangements, cleanliness, the construction of ghats, the beautification of tirthas, and the well-organised management of religious events are notable work in this direction. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) too continues to work towards the conservation of protected monuments, their scientific repair, and the protection of

archaeological sites. These efforts have given new life to numerous heritage sites.

The role of universities and research institutions is likewise exceedingly important. Research carried out by the departments of history, archaeology, Sanskrit, and tourism at Kurukshetra University and other academic institutions is the foundation stone of future conservation. It is necessary to connect students not merely with bookish knowledge, but with actual heritage through field study. This will develop, within the new generation, a sense of respect and responsibility towards their cultural heritage.

Religious institutions and temple management committees too can make an important contribution to this work. If arrangements were made at every tirtha for cleanliness, tree-planting, water conservation, and the provision of historical information, devotees would be able not merely to take darshan, but also to understand the history and significance of that site. During religious events, priority should also be given to plastic-free precincts, cleanliness campaigns, and environmental conservation.

Local rural society is the true guardian of this heritage. Many ancient tirthas remain safe today because of the faith and traditions of village people. Folk tales, fairs, religious observances, and oral traditions passed down from generation to generation keep this heritage alive. It is therefore exceedingly necessary to ensure the active participation of the local community in conservation schemes.

During my research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, it became clear, in numerous villages, that local elders possess historical and cultural details that are not found in any book. These oral traditions should be scientifically documented in time. If this is not done, this invaluable knowledge may be lost forever in the years to come.

Ultimately, it is necessary to understand that Kurukshetra is not merely a heritage of Haryana or India, but a cultural heritage of the whole of humanity. The universal message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, the teaching of dharma and duty, and the historical significance of this land grant it a distinctive identity at the world level. Its conservation is therefore our moral responsibility, not merely towards the present generation, but towards generations to come as well.

Part 4

The future of Kurukshetra depends not merely on its physical development, but also on how sensitively we conserve its historical, religious, and cultural identity. If development schemes are based on the principles of heritage conservation, Kurukshetra can further strengthen its place, in the time to come, among the world's leading spiritual, cultural, and research centres.

At present, religious tourism is growing at a rapid pace. Devotees arriving from within India and abroad wish to know not merely darshan, but also the history, culture, and traditions of that land. It is therefore necessary that authentic historical information, multilingual information boards, digital

QR codes, guidebooks, and trained guides be made available at every principal and minor tirtha. This will give devotees accurate information and will also help check misleading accounts.

Modern technology can prove exceedingly useful in the conservation of Kurukshetra. Digital documentation, high-quality photography, drone surveys, and three-dimensional (3D) documentation should be undertaken of all principal tirthas, ancient mounds, inscriptions, and archaeological sites. Should any site suffer damage owing to a natural disaster or other causes, this digital record will prove exceedingly helpful in its restoration.

Extensive possibilities still exist in the field of research as well. There are numerous tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra that require independent research. New historical facts can be brought to light through the comparative study of the Puranas, the Mahabharata, ancient travel accounts, copper plates, inscriptions, and local folk memory. This will make Kurukshetra's history even more authentic and rich.

As a researcher, my journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra made it clear that the true strength of this region lies not merely in its renowned tirthas, but also in those lesser-discussed sites which remain alive today with their original identity and popular faith. The conservation, documentation, and promotion of these sites should be a future priority. These very places are the true witnesses to Kurukshetra's cultural continuity.

The identity of Kurukshetra is not confined to the memories of the past alone. It remains, even today, a living laboratory of Indian culture, religion, philosophy, and folk life. The Gita Jayanti Mahotsav held here every year, the religious fairs, cultural programmes, Vedic observances, and academic seminars are proof that this land continues to move forward, connecting its ancient tradition with the modern age.

It may finally be said that modern Kurukshetra can become a superb example of balance between development and conservation. For this, government, research institutions, religious organisations, local society, and every citizen will have to discharge their responsibility equally. It is only when development, environment, history, and faith — all four — are brought into harmony that Kurukshetra's immortal heritage will remain safe, and future generations too will be able to experience this sacred land with the very same devotion.

Thus concludes "Chapter 36 — Modern Kurukshetra: Changing Character and the Challenges of Conservation."

Chapter 37

Research Methodology, References, and Sources

(Fact-verification note: the four parts of this chapter were reviewed against authentic sources. References to ancient texts (such as the mention of Samantapanchaka) and government institutions were found to be correct. In one place, the name of an institution was in error — the official name of the "Haryana Department of Archaeology and Museums" is the "Haryana Directorate of Archaeology and Museums"; this has been corrected.)

Part 1

The reliability of any historical or cultural treatise does not depend on its subject matter alone; it also depends on the sources, evidence, and research methodology on the basis of which its conclusions are presented. 'Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna' is not merely a book based on religious faith; it is a work of research prepared through the integration of history, archaeology, geography, literature, religion, folk tradition, and direct field research.

The purpose of writing this book has not been to support or oppose any doctrine, sect, or tradition, but to present a balanced and authentic account of Kurukshetra's cultural and historical heritage on the basis of the available evidence. Wherever differences appeared among various sources, a

comparative study of many sources has been undertaken, adopting as impartial a perspective as possible.

The foundation of this research has rested on four principal pillars — ancient texts, archaeological evidence, government records, and direct field study. The integration of these four sources has kept the book from being confined to religious description alone, and has given it the character of an authentic research document.

Under ancient literature, the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Atharvaveda, the Brahmana texts, the Upanishads, the Mahabharata, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, the Vamana Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Brahma Purana, and other ancient texts were studied. An effort was made to comparatively analyse the mentions of Kurukshetra, the river Saraswati, Brahma Sarovar, Samantapanchaka, and various tirthas described in these texts, and to understand their connection with present-day geographical conditions.

In the second stage, research papers, survey reports, and records published by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Haryana Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, the Kurukshetra Development Board, and other government institutions were studied. These sources provided facts concerning the historical development, archaeological significance, and conservation of numerous sites, further strengthening the authenticity of the book.

The most important aspect of this research was direct field study. The author personally visited numerous principal and

lesser-known tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra region. During these journeys, through site inspection, the collection of local folklore, the documentation of site photographs, and dialogue established with local scholars, priests, and villagers, numerous facts were compiled that are not generally available in published literature. This direct study gave the book the character not merely of a compilation, but of original research.

This treatise is thus not merely a collection of bookish information, but the integrated outcome of ancient texts, modern research, government records, and direct experience. This is its greatest distinction, and this is what grants it an identity distinct from the general books available on Kurukshetra.

Part 2

The quality of any work of research is determined by the level at which the facts presented in it have been verified. On subjects connected with history, religion, and folk tradition, differing views are often found regarding the same event or tirtha. In such situations, rather than relying on any single source, a multi-source method was adopted in this book. Wherever possible, confirmation of a fact was sought on the basis of all of these — ancient texts, archaeological evidence, government records, and field study.

During the research, it became clear that the names of numerous tirthas of Kurukshetra have changed over time. In some places, pronunciation has changed; in others, the form of the name has changed under the influence of the local

language; and in yet others, two or more names are current for the same tirtha. In such circumstances, an effort was made to reach a proper conclusion through a comparative study of all three — the name described in ancient texts, modern government records, and local tradition.

Direct field study remained the most powerful aspect of this research. On reaching each site, its geographical position, present form, religious activities, architecture, water sources, and the surrounding historical remains were observed. At numerous places, dialogue was established with local priests, senior citizens of the village, persons with an interest in history, and devotees, and oral traditions were also compiled. This information was not accepted without verification, but was matched against the available written sources.

Numerous practical challenges also arose during the research. Some ancient tirthas were difficult to reach, directional signage was not available at many places, and published information regarding some sites was exceedingly limited. On several occasions, mutually contradictory accounts of the same subject were found in different books. On such occasions, adopting an impartial perspective, rather than declaring any single view to be the final truth, various views were mentioned, and a balanced conclusion was presented on the basis of the evidence.

Modern digital resources too were used carefully in the making of this book. Government websites, digital archives, published research papers, archaeological reports, and

material made available by authentic institutions were studied. But not every piece of information available on the internet was regarded as authentic. Only those facts were accepted that could be confirmed from reliable sources.

In the writing of this research, particular care was also taken that the language remain simple, flowing, and accessible to general readers, while the facts remain of research standard. For this reason, historical analysis has been presented in the book wherever necessary, and, wherever appropriate, the subject has been made more vivid through travel narrative. This has made the treatise equally useful for researchers, students, lovers of history, devotees, and general readers alike.

Ultimately, this research rests on the conviction that history is a continuously evolving tradition of knowledge. Should new archaeological evidence, records, or authentic research become available in future, they will enrich the history of Kurukshetra further. This treatise should therefore be regarded not as final truth, but as an honest, balanced, and authentic research endeavour undertaken on the basis of the available evidence.

Part 3

The most important distinction of this treatise is its multidimensional research methodology. Generally, many books written on Kurukshetra place greater emphasis on either religious belief or historical fact alone, but in this treatise, an effort has been made to bring together ancient literature, archaeological evidence, government records,

geography, folk tradition, and direct field study, presenting a comprehensive study of the subject. This is the foundation of its originality.

During the research, photographic documentation was undertaken of each tirtha as far as possible. Images were compiled through direct observation of the site's present condition, its temples, lakes, ancient remains, inscriptions, religious activities, and natural surroundings. The purpose of these images was not merely to make the book attractive, but also to provide visual evidence for future researchers. Should the form of any site change with time, these records will prove helpful in its historical study.

The cooperation of local society during the field study was exceedingly inspiring. Numerous villagers, temple priests, scholars, and social workers shared their experiences, family traditions, and local history. Although oral traditions hold their own particular importance, they were included in this book only when they were found to correspond with other available sources, or when their cultural significance could be clearly understood. This was an effort to maintain the impartiality and reliability of the research.

It was also kept in mind, in the making of this treatise, that the reader should not merely read a collection of facts, but should also be able to experience the cultural soul of Kurukshetra. Historical analysis has therefore been presented wherever necessary, and, wherever it seemed appropriate, the author's direct travel experiences have been included in limited

measure. This has established a balanced integration of research and experience.

This book has not been written with the purpose of giving rise to any controversy. Where the views of various scholars differ, a balanced discussion, respecting all the principal perspectives as far as possible, has been presented on the basis of the evidence. The responsibility of history is not to give rise to disagreement, but to come closer to the truth on the basis of the available evidence. This very principle has been made the foundation of this research.

Vast possibilities exist for future research on Kurukshetra. In particular, there is a need for thorough study of the ancient course of the river Saraswati, the lesser-known tirthas of the 48-kos region, archaeological mounds, ancient routes, inscriptions, and folk traditions. Through modern techniques — such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), satellite imagery, drone surveys, and digital documentation — the history of this region can be understood in an even more authentic form.

The author's humble conviction is that this treatise is not a final conclusion, but will become a foundation for future research. Should future researchers examine the facts presented in this book, add new evidence, and enrich Kurukshetra's cultural heritage further, this will prove the greatest purpose of this research.

Ultimately, this treatise is a tribute to all those scholars, archaeologists, historians, saints, local citizens, and unnamed

persons who, directly or indirectly, have kept Kurukshetra's invaluable heritage safe to this day. It is because of their efforts that this sacred land continues, even today, to guide the world as a living heritage of Indian culture, religion, philosophy, and history.

Part 4

Every work of research has its own certain limitations, and this treatise is no exception. The history of Kurukshetra has developed over millennia. From the Vedic age to the modern era, numerous changes have occurred in its form, boundaries, tirthas, and cultural traditions. Many ancient sites have vanished in the flow of time, some have changed location, and differences still exist among scholars regarding some. This book has therefore given place only to those facts that are supported by sufficient evidence, or that are clearly mentioned in ancient texts, archaeological evidence, or reliable historical sources.

During the research, it also became clear that sufficient academic research has not yet been undertaken on many smaller tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. Some places find mention only in local traditions, while detailed archaeological or historical study of them is still awaited. This treatise has therefore viewed such subjects not as final conclusions, but as possibilities for research.

The purpose of this book is not to adjudicate any religious belief. Faith and history each have their own domain. Where faith is a matter of devotion, history is a discipline based on

evidence and reasoning. This treatise has attempted to maintain a balance between the two, so that the reader may understand historical facts while also respecting religious tradition.

The field of Kurukshetra studies is exceedingly vast for future researchers. In particular, there is a need for thorough research on the ancient course of the river Saraswati, the actual locations of the Vedic hermitages, Mahabharata-era archaeological evidence, ancient trade routes, the medieval tirtha tradition, and local folk memory. If various universities, archaeological institutions, and independent researchers work together on these subjects, many new dimensions of Kurukshetra's history may come to light.

This treatise may prove useful as a foundational work for researchers, historians, students, students of pilgrimage, tourism specialists, and general readers alike. The references, field study, direct travel observation, and comparative analysis employed in it provide guiding material for future research. The author's hope is that readers will not merely read this book, but will themselves visit the tirthas of Kurukshetra and directly experience this great cultural heritage.

The published research of numerous scholars, ancient scriptures, government records, archaeological reports, local traditions, and the author's own direct research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra have played an important role in the making of this treatise. The author expresses gratitude towards all these sources. If, through this book,

public awareness, research interest, and a spirit of conservation towards Kurukshetra's ancient heritage are strengthened, the purpose of this research endeavour will be considered successful.

Ultimately, 'Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna' is not merely a book, but a humble effort to preserve, in authentic form, India's ancient cultural memory, spiritual consciousness, and historical heritage. It is hoped that this treatise will become a reliable foundation of inspiration, study, and research for future generations, and will contribute towards carrying the Sanatan glory of Kurukshetra to readers within India and abroad.

Chapter 38

The 48-Kos Kurukshetra: A Researcher's Journey and Experience

(Fact-verification note: the four parts of this chapter were reviewed against authentic sources. Two place names were corrected — in place of "Karna Lake", the correct name "Karna ka Tila, Mirzapur" has been used, and in place of "Harshavardhana's Fort", the correct name "Harsh ka Tila, Thanesar" has been used, in keeping with the official records of the Kurukshetra Development Board and the district administration. The remaining facts and personal details have been kept unchanged. In addition, suitable images from among the family photographs made available by the author have been included in this chapter.)

Part 1

The best means of understanding any historical or religious site is not the study of books alone, but also directly seeing that land, experiencing its atmosphere, and establishing dialogue with the local community. It was with this very purpose that I resolved upon a research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. This journey was not confined to tirtha-darshan alone; its purpose was to undertake a historical, cultural, geographical, and archaeological study of those sites mentioned in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, and other ancient texts.

This journey was planned after several months of study. After studying ancient texts, government records, the maps published by the Kurukshetra Development Board, archaeological reports, and the available research literature, a list was prepared of the principal and minor tirthas that needed to be seen directly. The purpose was not to remain confined to renowned tirthas alone, but also to reach those lesser-known sites which, despite their historical significance, had not received the promotion they deserved.

During the journey, I felt that the true identity of Kurukshetra is not confined to Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, or Sannihit Sarovar alone. Numerous small villages, ancient lakes, hermitages, temples, and historical sites of the 48-kos region are likewise important links of this great cultural heritage. Many places keep their ancient traditions alive to this day, and local society conserves them with exceeding reverence and dedication.

This journey was not the journey of an ordinary tourist. On reaching each site, its geographical position, historical background, architecture, religious activities, water sources, and local beliefs were carefully studied. Wherever possible, dialogue was established with local priests, scholars, senior citizens, and villagers, oral traditions were compiled, and these were comparatively examined against the available written sources.

During the journey, numerous sites also came to light that are mentioned only in limited literature, but whose historical and

religious significance is exceedingly profound. The direct inspection of such sites was one of the greatest achievements of this research. This made clear that Kurukshetra's cultural heritage is not confined to renowned tirthas alone, but is spread evenly across the entire 48-kos region.

As a researcher, this journey also taught me that history is not found in books alone; it lives on also in the lanes of villages, the tranquil waters of ancient lakes, the bells of temples, folk tales, and popular memory. It is only when all these sources are viewed together that the true historical identity of a region comes to light.

Every stage of this journey was, for me, a subject of study, experience, and self-reflection. While, on one hand, the remains of ancient civilisation recalled the glory of the past, on the other, the challenges of modern development and conservation gave rise to a sense of new responsibilities towards the future. These very experiences became the inspiration for the writing of this book.

Part 2

My journey to Kurukshetra began in the year 1981. At that time, I came to this sacred land as an ordinary pilgrim. At that age, I had neither undertaken a thorough study of history, nor had any plan for research writing. Devotion alone was my greatest inspiration. Bathing in Brahma Sarovar, taking darshan at temples, and experiencing the religious atmosphere were the principal purpose of my journey at that time.

With time, life gave me many new experiences. Service in the Indian Army, travel across various states of the country, the Kargil War, participation in a United Nations peacekeeping mission, and, after retirement, the study of history and culture gave my perspective a new dimension. It was then that I felt that the Kurukshetra I had seen in 1981 as a devotee should now be understood afresh, from the perspective of a historian and researcher.

[Photograph in original manuscript] With his wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, at a divine night-time event — Kurukshetra.

It was with this very feeling that I began a systematic study of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra. This time, my journey was not confined to darshan alone. A comparative study of each tirtha's history, its mention in the Puranas, its archaeological significance, its present condition, local traditions, and government records became the purpose of this journey.

My numerous visits, undertaken on various occasions over more than four decades, matured this research. In the year 2026, a planned research journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra brought this long-term study to completion. This treatise is thus not the result of any single journey, but the transformation, into research, of a journey of faith that began in 1981.

Part 3

Most of the religious and research journeys of my life have been accomplished with the cooperation and companionship

of my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav. She has encouraged me at every step, not merely as a life partner, but as a fellow traveller on my research journeys as well. In long journeys, visits to tirthas, photography, the compilation of local information, and research work, her cooperation has always been a source of inspiration.

[Photograph in original manuscript] With his wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, and grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, before the Vishvarupa statue — Brahma Sarovar, Kurukshetra.

My first book, "Bandook se Kalam Tak," mentioned approximately fifty religious journeys. Even at that time, this number was an achievement for me, but the sequence of journeys never stopped thereafter. Today the situation is such that it has become difficult even to count how many research and religious journeys I have undertaken. Each new journey taught me something new, and each tirtha revealed to me a fresh layer of Indian culture.

Over time, my family too became part of these journeys. My grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, also accompanied me on numerous occasions in visiting these tirthas. It is a matter of great satisfaction for me that the new generation too is getting the opportunity to see and understand our cultural heritage directly. Journeys undertaken with the family were not merely tourism; they became a living school of sacrament, history, and faith.

[Photograph in original manuscript] With his grandchildren, at the ghat of Brahma Sarovar — Kurukshetra.

The journeys to Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, Mata Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Sannihit Sarovar, Saraswati Tirtha, the Sthaneshwar Mahadev Temple, Harsh ka Tila, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, and numerous other tirthas within the 48-Kos Kurukshetra remain vivid in my memory to this day. Each site offered the opportunity to open a new chapter of history, and each journey contributed towards making this work of research more authentic.

Whenever the desire awakens within me to see some new tirtha, historical site, or archaeological remain, I set out with my car, without any formal plan. On many occasions I went alone, while on numerous others my friends and companions accompanied me on these journeys. The purpose of each journey remained the same — to see the site with my own eyes, to understand its history, and to record it authentically.

It has been by God's boundless grace that, during these journeys of thousands of kilometres, I never had to face any major obstacle or accident. Every journey was completed safely, and each time I felt that some unseen power was guiding my path of research. This very faith continued to inspire me to move forward without pause.

The research journeys that began after my retirement from the Indian Army in the year 2008 went on to give birth to numerous books. Today, with your cooperation and guidance, 7 Hindi and 9 English books of mine have been published. "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna" will be my 17th Hindi book. It is my

resolve also to publish its English edition, which, as my 18th English book, will become a means of carrying this invaluable heritage of Kurukshetra to readers across the world.

This journey has not yet ended. As long as the Almighty grants health, capability, and opportunity, the study, research, and writing of India's Sanatan cultural heritage will remain my life's spiritual discipline.

Part 4

This research journey through Kurukshetra was, for me, not merely a search for historical facts; it was a continuous spiritual discipline of understanding spiritual experience, cultural consciousness, and national heritage. This journey, which began in 1981 as that of an ordinary pilgrim, was transformed, with time, into a serious research expedition. After my retirement from the Indian Army in 2008, I resolved that I would devote the remainder of my life to the study, conservation, and writing of India's historical, religious, and cultural heritage. This treatise is an important outcome of that very resolve.

This journey taught me that history is not preserved in records and texts alone; it lives on also in people's memories, folk songs, the bells of temples, the ripples of lakes, the shade of ancient trees, and the sacred dust of tirthas. It is only when a researcher views all these sources with equal respect that the true history of a region is revealed to him.

[Photograph in original manuscript] With his grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, before a mural depicting the pastimes of Shri Krishna — Kurukshetra.

My greatest achievement was that, through these journeys, my entire family too grew closer to Indian culture. My wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, accompanied me on every difficult journey. My grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, too visited numerous tirthas, seeing our cultural heritage at close quarters. It is my conviction that it is only when the new generation directly beholds its history and its tirthas that a natural sense of respect and responsibility towards its culture will develop within them.

My journeys have not been a means of any personal achievement. Their purpose has always been to acquire knowledge, and to convey that knowledge to society. Whenever I receive information about some new tirtha, ancient site, or historical remain, my mind is naturally moved to go there. I undertook many journeys alone, many with my companions, and most journeys were accomplished with my family. Each journey enriched my experiences and gave my writing new direction.

It has been by the Almighty's boundless grace that, during these research journeys of thousands of kilometres, no calamity ever arose that diminished my enthusiasm. Every journey remained safe, and, returning from each journey, I felt that a new chapter of India's Sanatan culture had been added to my life. This very divine grace continued to give me the strength to move forward without pause.

On the basis of these research journeys, numerous books of mine have been published to date. Each book is, for me, not merely a publication, but a humble effort towards the conservation of India's cultural heritage. "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna" too is an important link in that very spiritual discipline. My purpose is not to confine this treatise to Hindi alone, but also to carry the historical and spiritual glory of Kurukshetra to readers across the world through its English edition.

If, after reading this book, any reader is inspired to visit some tirtha of Kurukshetra, any student resolves to undertake further research on this subject, or any young person makes an effort to understand their cultural heritage, I shall consider this long research endeavour of mine successful. This is the true purpose of this book.

[Photograph in original manuscript] With his wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, and grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav — the journey of Sanatan Kurukshetra.

In conclusion, I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Supreme Father Almighty, my gurus, my family, my companions, local scholars, villagers, and all those known and unknown persons through whose cooperation, inspiration, and blessing this research journey was made possible. It is my conviction that this journey will not stop in the years to come either. As long as life and health permit, the search, study, and writing of India's Sanatan cultural heritage will remain my life's spiritual discipline.

Chapter 39

Sanatan Kurukshetra: The Prospects of Becoming a World Cultural Heritage Site

(Fact-verification note: all four parts were reviewed. The tirtha names (Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Pehowa, Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, Narkatari) were found correct, in keeping with the previously verified list. The "forty-five-year journey" (1981–2026) and "research journeys after 2008" mentioned in Part 4 are consistent with the account given in the earlier chapter (38). This chapter is based chiefly on the author's views, aspirations, and concluding reflections — no factual error was found in it, and no correction was therefore deemed necessary.)

Part 1

Kurukshetra is not merely a historical town of India; it is a unique centre of the cultural, philosophical, and spiritual consciousness of the whole of human civilisation. This is the very sacred land where, amid the struggle between dharma and adharma, Lord Shri Krishna gave Arjuna the immortal teaching of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. This teaching is not confined to any single religion, caste, or nation, but is a universal message of duty, ethics, self-knowledge, and public welfare for the whole of humanity. It is for this reason that the

significance of Kurukshetra is exceptional not merely as a religious tirtha, but also as a world cultural heritage.

The world's great civilisations are recognised not merely by their monuments, but by the ideas that gave new direction to human society. The pyramids of Egypt, Athens in Greece, the ancient city of Rome, the Great Wall of China, and India's Taj Mahal are renowned across the world for their respective historical distinctions. In the same way, Kurukshetra's identity rests not on any single structure or monument, but on that spiritual message which has guided humanity for thousands of years.

The 48-kos region of Kurukshetra is a living cluster of countless tirthas, lakes, hermitages, ancient temples, archaeological sites, and cultural traditions. Brahma Sarovar, Sannihit Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev, Pehowa, Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, Narkatari, and numerous other tirthas together constitute a cultural heritage whose extent is not confined to any single town. This entire region presents the form of a living cultural landscape.

During my direct study of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, I felt that its greatest strength is its continuously living tradition. Numerous historical sites have remained merely as archaeological remains, but in Kurukshetra, tirthas, fairs, religious observances, the Gita Jayanti Mahotsav, bathing in the lakes, the method of worship at the temples, and folk traditions remain alive today, with the very same devotion. It

is this very continuity that grants it an identity distinct from the world's other ancient cultural sites.

The standing of any site as a cultural heritage at the world level is determined not merely by its antiquity, but by its Outstanding Universal Value. Kurukshetra meets this criterion from many perspectives. Here is found such a confluence of history, philosophy, religion, literature, archaeology, folk culture, and living faith as is exceedingly rare in the world.

It is for this very reason that Kurukshetra should not be viewed merely as a religious tourism site, but should be understood within the broader perspective of world cultural heritage. For this, continuous efforts should be made in the direction of research, conservation, documentation, environmental protection, public awareness, and the strengthening of its historical and cultural identity at the international level.

Part 2

The basis of Kurukshetra's global identity is not merely its ancient history, but the eternal knowledge that has inspired humanity for millennia. The message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is today available in numerous languages of the world, and is studied in the universities of many countries in the context of philosophy, ethics, management, and leadership. This makes clear that the significance of Kurukshetra is not confined to the boundaries of any single nation, but has already been accepted as an intellectual and spiritual heritage of the whole world.

If Kurukshetra is to be established as a world cultural heritage, religious faith alone will not suffice for this. It requires the systematic and scientific documentation of historical evidence, archaeological proof, cultural continuity, natural surroundings, and living traditions. Detailed records, geographical mapping, photographic documentation, digital archives, and historical descriptions should be prepared for every principal and minor tirtha of the 48-kos region. This will provide a strong foundation for the conservation and study of this region in future.

During my research, I felt that Kurukshetra's greatest distinction is its cultural continuity. The remains of many ancient civilisations are today confined to museums alone, while, at Kurukshetra, devotees still bathe in Brahma Sarovar, recall the Gita at Jyotisar, perform ancestral tarpan at Sannihit Sarovar, and religious observances continue to be held at various tirthas in accordance with ancient traditions. This living tradition is the greatest cultural strength of this region.

To grant Kurukshetra greater standing at the international level, research, education, and cultural exchange will also need to be encouraged. Universities, historians, archaeologists, and students of culture from within India and abroad can be connected with this region through joint research projects. National and international seminars, exhibitions, research conferences, and cultural festivals will further strengthen Kurukshetra's global identity.

At the same time, it is also necessary to place the role of the local community at the centre. Any cultural heritage remains alive only when the people living around it regard its conservation as their own responsibility. Cleanliness, environmental conservation, the protection of reservoirs, the conservation of ancient trees, and the maintenance of the tirthas' original dignity is the responsibility not merely of government departments, but of society as well. No conservation scheme can succeed in the long term without public participation.

My research journey through the 48-kos region further strengthened the conviction that Kurukshetra is not merely a memory of the past, but an inspiration for the present and the future as well. If all the tirthas, archaeological sites, cultural traditions, and natural heritage of this region are conserved with a comprehensive perspective, Kurukshetra can further strengthen its distinctive place, in the time to come, among the world's leading centres of spiritual and cultural study.

It is therefore the need of the hour that Kurukshetra be viewed not merely as a religious tourism site, but as the shared cultural heritage of human civilisation. This very perspective can carry its global standing to new heights, and can become the foundation for keeping this invaluable heritage safe for generations to come.

Part 3

The significance of Kurukshetra is not confined to its glorious past alone; it is a source of inspiration for the present and the

future as well. Today, when the world discusses peace, ethical leadership, environmental conservation, and human values, the message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, given by Lord Shri Krishna upon the land of Kurukshetra, appears more relevant than ever before. This is why Kurukshetra can become not merely a historical site, but a symbol of global dialogue and human values.

Kurukshetra also holds vast possibilities in the field of spiritual tourism. At present, lakhs of devotees come here from within India and abroad, but if all the principal and lesser-known tirthas of the 48-kos region were developed as an Integrated Pilgrimage Circuit, devotees and researchers would have the opportunity to understand the entire cultural heritage of Kurukshetra. This would also give new momentum to the local economy, traditional handicrafts, cultural activities, and rural tourism.

In my view, a 'Digital Heritage Mission' should be initiated for Kurukshetra. Under this, a digital archive could be prepared of each tirtha's history, geographical position, archaeological significance, mention in ancient texts, rare images, and research material. A QR-code-based information system should be developed at each site, so that every visitor arriving from within India and abroad can read and view the authentic history of that tirtha through their mobile phone. This would also provide effective control over misleading information.

The role of educational and research institutions will be exceedingly important in establishing Kurukshetra at the

global level. If 'Kurukshetra Studies Centres' were established at universities, multidimensional research on history, archaeology, culture, philosophy, environment, tourism, and folk literature would receive new direction. Research fellowships, international seminars, and joint research projects for scholars from within India and abroad could further strengthen this region's global standing.

My research journey through the 48-kos region further strengthened the conviction that Kurukshetra's greatest strength is its living culture. Here, tirthas are not merely historical monuments; they remain continuously alive today through worship, yajna, recitation of the Gita, fairs, festivals, and folk traditions. It is this very continuity that makes this region distinctive among the world's many ancient sites, and keeps its cultural identity unimpaired.

As a researcher, my humble prayer is that Kurukshetra be viewed not merely from a religious standpoint, but as the shared cultural heritage of human civilisation. Its conservation is not the responsibility of any single department, institution, or state, but the collective responsibility of the whole of society. It is only when historians, archaeologists, educationists, religious institutions, local communities, and government work together that the true dignity of Kurukshetra will reach future generations safely.

It is my firm conviction that, if continuous efforts are made in the direction of conservation, research, public participation, and international promotion, the day is not far when the name

of Kurukshetra will be spoken with even greater honour among the world's great cultural heritages. This will not be the pride of Haryana or India alone, but will become a source of inspiration for the whole of humanity.

Part 4

Kurukshetra is among those rare cultural lands of India where history, spirituality, philosophy, culture, and folk life appear not separate from one another, but interconnected. It is not merely the land of the Mahabharata War, but a sacred land that conveys to humanity the message of dharma, duty, justice, compassion, and selfless action. This is why the significance of Kurukshetra transcends the boundaries of time, country, and language, becoming a source of inspiration for the whole world.

In my view, Kurukshetra's greatest distinction is that the past remains alive here even today. The sacred waves of Brahma Sarovar, the banyan tree of Jyotisar, the religious traditions of Sannihit Sarovar, the ancient temple of Sthaneshwar Mahadev, the reverence of Mata Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth, the ancestral tradition of Pehowa, Bhishma Kund, Banganga, Abhimanyupur, and numerous tirthas of the 48-kos region continue, even today, to carry forward the very cultural stream that has enriched Indian civilisation for thousands of years.

My approximately forty-five years of journeys to Kurukshetra, and, in particular, my research journeys since 2008, have given me the conviction that the true splendour of this region lies not merely in its renowned tirthas, but also in the hundreds of

small sites that remain alive today because of the faith and traditions of rural society. The conservation, scientific documentation, and historical study of all these sites is the greatest need of the future.

If, in the years to come, the government, the Kurukshetra Development Board, the Archaeological Survey of India, universities, religious institutions, local society, and independent researchers together prepare a shared plan of action, the comprehensive conservation of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra can be undertaken more effectively. This will not merely be the work of conserving monuments, but also the national responsibility of keeping India's ancient cultural memory safe.

I particularly wish to urge the youth not to know Kurukshetra merely through examination textbooks or religious tales. They should come to this land themselves, visit the tirthas, directly see the history, converse with local people, and make an effort to understand their cultural roots. It is only when the new generation itself sees and understands its heritage that its conservation too will naturally be assured.

In writing this treatise, my purpose was not merely to compile facts. My endeavour was that the reader should experience Kurukshetra as a living cultural heritage. In this book, wherever ancient texts, archaeological evidence, and historical sources have been used, the experiences of my own direct research journeys through the 48-kos region have likewise been authentically incorporated. It is hoped that this treatise

will prove useful to future researchers, historians, students, and pilgrims.

In conclusion, I dedicate this treatise to all those known and unknown great figures, sages, saints, historians, archaeologists, local citizens, and devotees who, in their respective times, contributed towards keeping this invaluable heritage of Kurukshetra safe. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my family, my companions, and all those persons who, directly or indirectly, cooperated in making my research journeys successful.

It is my firm conviction that "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna" is not merely a book, but a humble effort to carry the cultural heritage of this sacred land forward to future generations. If this treatise inspires any reader to visit Kurukshetra, to understand its history, or towards its conservation, I shall consider this long research endeavour of mine successful.

Chapter 40

Epilogue: Sanatan Kurukshetra — From the Past Towards the Future

(Fact-verification note: all three parts were reviewed. The "forty-five-year pilgrimage" (1981–2026), "retirement in the year 2008", and "twenty-four years of service in the Indian Army" — all these details were found fully consistent with the earlier chapters (38, 39) and the author's official biography. The tirtha names (Brahma Sarovar, Jyotisar, Sannihit Sarovar, Sthaneshwar Mahadev) are correct, in keeping with the previously verified list. The author's title, "Retired Honorary Naib Subedar", likewise matches the official record. No factual error was found in this chapter, and no correction was therefore deemed necessary.)

Part 1

Every research journey has a stage, but it has no end. As I complete the writing of "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," the feeling within me is that this treatise is not the conclusion of any journey, but the beginning of a new path of research. This humble outcome of approximately forty-five years of pilgrimage, study, reflection, direct observation, and research discipline is presented before readers.

When I first travelled to Kurukshetra in 1981 as an ordinary pilgrim, I had not even imagined that this very land would one

day become one of the greatest subjects of research in my life. At that time, there was only devotion in my mind, but, with time, study, experience, and the circumstances of life transformed that devotion into research.

Serving in the Indian Army, I had the opportunity to see many parts of the country. After my retirement in the year 2008, I resolved that I would devote the remainder of my life to the study and writing of India's historical, religious, and cultural heritage. After this, each of my journeys became not merely darshan, but a research expedition. At each site, an effort was made to understand history, to search for evidence, and to learn local traditions.

Working on Kurukshetra, I came to feel that the true history of this sacred land has still not come fully to light. Numerous ancient tirthas, lakes, hermitages, archaeological mounds, and folk traditions still await thorough study. This is why, in this treatise, I have not merely attempted to compile the available evidence, but, wherever possible, have attempted to understand and present facts on the basis of direct field study.

In writing this book, my purpose was not to propagate any doctrine, tradition, or ideology. My purpose was simply that Kurukshetra's cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage be placed before readers in authentic form. Where differing views were available on a subject, an effort has been made to present them from a balanced perspective. It is my conviction that history is respected only when it is viewed free of prejudice.

Through this treatise, I particularly wish to convey to the new generation the message that knowing one's history and culture is not merely the study of the past, but also the foundation stone of building the future. A society that keeps its cultural memory safe is the one that moves forward, in the time to come, with confidence and dignity. Kurukshetra teaches us this very lesson — that walking upon the path of dharma, duty, truth, and public welfare is the supreme achievement of human life.

Part 2

During the writing of this treatise, I repeatedly felt that Kurukshetra is not merely a geographical region, but the living form of India's Sanatan consciousness. Every tirtha here, every lake, every ancient temple, and every historical site is, as it were, a witness to the thousands-of-years-old journey of our civilisation. This land has witnessed the penance of the sages, has borne witness to the great struggle of the Mahabharata, and has carried the immortal message of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, spoken by Lord Shri Krishna, to the world.

While writing this book, I often felt that I was not merely writing history, but giving words to that cultural heritage which has, for generations, flowed within the soul of Indian society. With each chapter, my own curiosity grew further, and each research journey taught me that there is no final point to knowledge. The more I studied, the more I felt that a great deal still remains to be known and understood about Kurukshetra.

I express particular gratitude to my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, who stood by me at every stage of life. Most of my research journeys were made possible only through her cooperation. Amid long journeys, difficult circumstances, and continuous study on numerous occasions, her patience and cooperation became a source of inspiration for me. My grandson, Bhavesh Vaishnav, and my granddaughter, Divyanshi Swami, too, by joining me on numerous journeys, further strengthened the conviction that the sacrament of our cultural heritage must reach the new generation.

I also express my heartfelt gratitude to all those scholars, historians, archaeologists, saints and mahatmas, local residents, temple priests, and researchers through whose direct or indirect cooperation this work could be completed. Their knowledge, experience, and guidance made an important contribution towards making this book more authentic and useful.

The twenty-four years I spent in the Indian Army gave me the sacrament of discipline, patience, and service to the nation, and this very sacrament became the greatest strength of my research journeys. After my retirement in the year 2008, I resolved that I would devote the remainder of my life to the study and writing of India's cultural heritage. Today, as I write the final chapter of this treatise, I am satisfied that another important step has been completed in the direction of that resolve.

It is also my resolve to publish an English edition of "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," so that readers across the world too may come to know the historical, cultural, and spiritual glory of Kurukshetra in authentic form. India's cultural heritage is not India's alone, but the shared heritage of the whole of humanity, and it is the responsibility of all of us to present it before the world.

In conclusion, I wish to make only one humble request of my readers — if possible, do not read of Kurukshetra in books alone, but come to this sacred land yourselves. Sit in silence for a few moments upon the bank of Brahma Sarovar, recall the message of the Gita at Jyotisar, behold the faith of Sannihit Sarovar, take darshan at Sthaneshwar Mahadev, and reach also those lesser-known tirthas of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra where history and faith still walk together today. Then you will feel that Kurukshetra is not merely a tirtha, but a living form of the soul of India.

If, through this treatise, reverence for Kurukshetra, curiosity about history, an interest in research, and a resolve towards the conservation of cultural heritage are awakened within readers, I shall consider this long research endeavour of mine successful.

This is my spiritual discipline, this is the purpose of my pen, and this will be the greatest achievement of "Sanatan Kurukshetra."

Part 3

Final Message: My Pen, My Spiritual Discipline, and My Resolve

As I write the final page of this treatise, there is within me not the pride of having completed a book, but the humble contentment of a spiritual seeker. This book is, for me, not merely a collection of words, but the embodied form of life's experiences, journeys, study, research, faith, and penance. Service to the nation as a soldier, and service to culture as a researcher — these two journeys have given my life a new purpose.

When I look back upon the journey from my first pilgrimage to Kurukshetra in 1981 to the present day, it seems as though the Almighty guided me at every step. After my retirement from the Indian Army in the year 2008, I began the second chapter of my life. From that day to this, my endeavour has remained the same — to see, understand, and present before society, in authentic form, India's ancient cultural, religious, and historical heritage, through direct observation.

For me, the greatest reward, greater than any honour, award, or fame, is this — that some reader, having read my books, be inspired to visit some tirtha; that some young person resolve to undertake research into their history; or that some family set out to acquaint their children with India's cultural heritage. Should this come to pass, the purpose of my pen will have been fulfilled.

I also hold that the true identity of a writer rests not in the number of their published books, but in the reliability of their writing and its positive impact upon society. I have therefore given priority, in this treatise, as far as possible, to authentic sources, direct field study, historical facts, and a balanced perspective. Should new evidence come to light in future, it should be welcomed, for research is always an evolving process.

It is also my heartfelt wish that, in the years to come, detailed documentation be undertaken of every tirtha of the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, that the scientific conservation of every historical site be carried out, and that the new generation come to know this heritage not merely through books, but through direct experience. This is the greatest message of this book.

I express my infinite gratitude to the Supreme Father Almighty, who granted me health, patience, courage, and the strength to work continuously. I offer my heartfelt salutations to my wife, Smt. Nirmala Vaishnav, my family, my companions, my friends, local scholars, saints and mahatmas, and all those known and unknown persons through whose cooperation and good wishes this work could be completed.

In conclusion, I wish to place before my readers only one prayer —

Know your cultural heritage, visit your tirthas, read your history, and keep it safe for generations to come. This will be our greatest service to the nation.

It is in this very spirit that I carry my pen forward — not to a pause, but with a new resolve. Many tirthas still remain, much history remains untold, and many research journeys await me. As long as God's grace, health, and time remain with me, this spiritual discipline will continue without pause.

This work of research, "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," is a humble endeavour of devotion, study, and research. I dedicate it to Lord Shri Krishna, the divine land of sacred Kurukshetra, and those countless known and unknown great figures whose penance and sacrifice made this land immortal.

Om Tat Sat.

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Retired Honorary Naib Subedar, Indian Army | Historian | Researcher | Author

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I also express my heartfelt gratitude, in particular, to Shri Balwan ji, in charge of the Shri Krishna Museum, Kurukshetra. The Honorary Secretary, Shri Upendra Singhal ji, personally informed him by telephone of my research work and requested that he extend the necessary cooperation. When I reached the Shri Krishna Museum, Shri Balwan ji welcomed me with exceeding warmth and respect. He assigned a staff member to accompany me for a detailed tour of the museum, who gave me a thorough introduction to each gallery, the exhibits connected with the Mahabharata, the rare works of art, and the historical material. I was also given full facility to take the necessary photographs and to study. This cooperation proved exceedingly useful to me.

I also express particular gratitude to a senior and respected figure of our community, Master Shri Omprakash Bairagi ji, who presently serves as a guide at the Kurukshetra Development Board. He is a figure wholly devoted to social service, selfless and diligent. When I informed him of my research journey, he decided, with full enthusiasm, to guide me. He himself met me at the Vairagi Dharamshala, Kurukshetra, and took me from there to the Kurukshetra Development Board. Thereafter, during the journey through the 48-Kos Kurukshetra, he remained with me like a shadow. It was owing to his local knowledge, experience, and guidance that it became possible to reach many such tirthas, sites, and historical facts as further enrich the authenticity of this work of research.

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This treatise is respectfully dedicated to all those companions who made my path of research simple, meaningful, and successful.

— Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark

Retired Honorary Naib Subedar, Indian Army | Historian | Researcher | Author

About the Author

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Naresh Das Vaishnav Nimbark is an Honorary Naib Subedar (Retired) of the Indian Army, a historian, an independent researcher, an author, and a journalist. He served the nation in the Indian Army for approximately 24 years. His military service included important responsibilities such as Operation Vijay (the Kargil War, 1999) and the United Nations peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL), Sierra Leone, West Africa (2000).

His pilgrimages, which began in 1981, were transformed into systematic research journeys following his retirement from the army in 2008. Since then, he has undertaken direct study of numerous tirthas, ancient towns, historical sites, and archaeological heritage across India, presenting them as works of research on the basis of authentic sources, government records, the Puranas, and local traditions.

He is particularly known for his research on the Sanatan Vaishnava Bairagi tradition, the Indian tradition of saints, ancient tirthas, local history, and cultural heritage. His purpose is not merely to write history, but to conserve India's neglected heritage and to carry its authentic form forward to future generations.

To date, 16 independent books of his (7 in Hindi and 9 in English) have been published. The present treatise, "Sanatan Kurukshetra: Creation, Saraswati, and the Immortal Land of Lord Shri Krishna," is his seventeenth book and his eighth Hindi book. Plans are also underway to publish its English edition.

Published Hindi Books

1. Jagadguru Nimbarkacharya: Sanatan ke Surya
2. Sanatan Vaishnav Bairagi Parampara — Vedon se Aadhunik Bharat Tak
3. Swarnaprastha ki Gatha
4. Ramnagar: 422 Varshon ka Ansuna Itihas
5. Ranbhoomi se Tirthbhoomi Tak: Ek Sainik ki Amar Gatha
6. Yatra: Bandook se Kalam Tak
7. Mahant Bane Maharaja

Published Books in English

1. The Sanatan Vaishnav Bairagi Tradition
2. The Saga of Swarnprastha
3. Rosary and the Throne: The Vaishnav Bairagi Rulers
4. Jagatguru Nimbarkacharyaji: Sanatan Ke Surya
5. Ramnagar: 422 Years of Untold History
6. The Royal Legacy of the Sanatan Vaishnav Bairagis
7. The Vaishnav Bairagi Kings of India
8. Nimbark Sampradaya: Sanatan Vaishnav Bairagi Tradition
9. Sanatan Vaishnav Bairagi: Forgotten Warriors & Soldiers

The author is also the founder and editor-in-chief of the monthly e-magazine "Sanatan Bharat — Naya Savera." His books and research work are reaching readers across the world through Amazon, Notion Press, Google Play Books, and other international platforms.

"A soldier guards the borders of the nation, while the writer and researcher keep the nation's culture, civilisation, and history safe for generations to come."

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